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ORIENTALIS

42

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ARS ORIENTALIS VOLUME 42

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Earlier versions of these papers were presented at "Objects, Collections, and Cultures," a two-day symposium organized by the Historians of Islamic Art Association and held at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in October 2010. Massumeh Farhad and Marianne S. Simpson, symposium program cochairs and guest editors.

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PREFACE

In 1954, the Freer Gallery of Art and the Department of the History of Art at the University of Michigan jointly sponsored *Ars Orientalis* to replace and expand upon the journal *Ars Islamica*, first published in 1931. Since that time, *Ars Orientalis* has remained one of the premier scholarly forums for the publication of new and often groundbreaking research in the arts of Asia and the Islamic world. Among the many distinguished art historians who have contributed to the journal over the years, perhaps none played a more active role than Oleg Grabar. He both served as Near Eastern editor (1957–70) and provided important articles and reviews during *Ars Orientalis*'s early decades.

Indeed, Professor Grabar was also to write the introduction to this current volume, comprising the selected proceedings of a symposium held at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in October 2010. Sadly, his sudden death on January 8, 2011, precluded that contribution. Instead, we dedicate *Ars Orientalis* volume 42 to the memory of this prolific scholar and inspiring teacher and include a special tribute to Professor Grabar by one of his colleagues at the University of Michigan.

In October 2008, the Historians of Islamic Art Association (HIAA), an academic and professional organization that promotes the study and teaching of the arts, architecture, and archaeology of the Islamic world, launched a program of biennial conferences designed to highlight new discoveries, scholarship, and methodological approaches. Renata Holod, HIAA's president from 2008 to 2010, organized the association's inaugural symposium on the theme of "Spaces and Visions" at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The sessions, papers, and workshops, which ranged from the study of the medieval city of Merv to Lebanese modern art, were an indication of the discipline's remarkably broad and diverse interests.

The second HIAA Biennial Symposium was held at the Freer and Sackler in 2010. The program was devoted to the art of the object and its place, both singularly and collectively, within a broader historiographic and methodological framework. Titled "Objects, Collections, and Cultures," the two-day symposium addressed the materiality, functionality, and iconography of individual works; their role(s) as economic and cultural commodities; and their collective meaning and significance within a wider conceptual context. While the thematic scope of this conference was intentionally focused, the program considered multiple media, historic periods, collecting practices, and cultural traditions. The complete program is available at www.historiansofislamicart.org.

Julian Raby, the Freer and Sackler's director, opened the gathering with a keynote address on the study of medieval metalwork in the Arab world. Over the next two days, seven panels organized around formal presentations and commentary

alternated with six workshops that took place in the Freer's storage and conservation spaces. One of the symposium's highlights, these workshops were intended to encourage informal discussion and careful examination of individual works of art among a small group of participants. Another innovative session was a roundtable during which four panelists and the symposium audience talked about the challenges and approaches to the study, collecting, and display of objects and their place within the history and discipline of Islamic art today. Finally, the contemporary world was addressed through a series of presentations on films from Turkey, Iran, and Egypt. The program's variety encouraged lively debates among established and emerging scholars and university and museum professionals throughout the symposium's duration.

This volume includes a selection of the conference presentations and workshops, organized in six sections with some inevitable overlap. It opens with "The Language of Objects in the Islamic World," Lisa Golombek's summary of the roundtable session, without the give-and-take between the audience and panelists—Golombek, Oya Pancaroğlu, Oliver Watson, and Stefan Weber—that marked the original discussion.

In the next section, "Objects as Paradigms and Enigmas," Metzada Gelber focuses on an early incense burner from Egypt in the Freer's collection. Her paper considers the object in relation to both medieval Arab literature and contemporaneous architecture to explain its architectural form and propose a possible function. Revisiting the Pisa Griffin, Lamia Balafrej considers this celebrated object within the interface of medieval Islamic and Christian history and memory. Bernard O'Kane draws attention to some of the unusual features of al-Wāsiṭi's celebrated *Maqāmāt*, in particular the inclusion of several double-page compositions, which so far had gone unremarked.

The four papers in the third section, "Object as Document," offer close readings of a single object or workshop practices to reveal richly coded documentary information. By carefully examining the text of sixteenth-century illustrated copies of the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, Karin Rührdanz proposes a notable shift in artistic patronage in Safavid Iran. In her careful study of a Mosul ewer dated 1232, Ruba Kana'an suggests both a patron and recipient for the object and highlights the subtle working relationships of medieval craftsmen by examining particular names and titles. Based on the unusual decoration of an Artuqid candlestick, now in the Aqsa mosque, Hana Taragan argues that the work may have been sent as a special gift to Jerusalem to celebrate the Muslim triumph over the Crusaders. While these papers center on singular objects and their "documentary" importance, Bahattin Yaman focuses on the production of Ottoman royal kaftans and other clothing, and the organization of court tailors by analyzing a series of workshop documents.

In section four, “Cultures of Collecting,” May Farhat considers the creation, meaning, and implications of the Henri Pharaon collection in Lebanon. Barbara Karl focuses on the history of collecting Islamic art during the Habsburg era at its apogee in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which was marked by the formation of chambers of art and wonders (*Kunst-und Wunderkammern*). Emine Fetvacı discusses the phenomenon of collecting within the covers of an album of painting and calligraphy prepared for the Ottoman ruler Ahmed I.

Cross-cultural connections across time and space is the subject of the fifth section. In her paper on a copy of the *Gulistan* of Sādi, now in Tehran, Nourane Ben Azzouna describes successive interventions into the manuscript’s form and content over several centuries. Another example of intervention and appropriation is the Rampur *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh*, an early fourteenth-century text, discussed by Yael Rice. This copy of the universal history was first refurbished in late fifteenth-century Herat and then more extensively during Akbar’s rule in Mughal India. Krysta Black’s study of the profusely illustrated León Bible of 960 throws light on the manuscript’s pictorial language, which draws largely on unnoticed Umayyad designs and motifs.

Finally the sixth and last section, “Close Encounters in the Freer,” presents summaries of three workshops that focused on works of art in the Gallery’s collection: Heather Ecker and Teresa Fitzherbert discuss the function and origins of a celebrated medieval “canteen”; Renata Holod deconstructs the so-called Siege Scene (a.k.a. Battle) Plate; and Lawrence Nees offers a function for a small silver stand with eagles.

For the first time, *Ars Orientalis* includes a digital component. The papers presented at the symposium session on “‘Cinematic Realism’ in the Middle East” are also available, accompanied by film clips, on the Freer and Sackler website: www.asia.si.edu. This electronic offering constitutes the most recent and innovative development in the journal’s almost sixty-year publication history. The collaboration of *Ars Orientalis*, the Historians of Islamic Art Association, and the Freer and Sackler in the production of this volume marks another milestone—for the journal, the association, and the museums alike—combining as it does the continuation of well-established scholarly practices and the forging of new and fruitful institutional relationships. We anticipate that *Ars Orientalis*, in concert with academic and museum organizations, will continue to present original and innovative scholarship in both content and format and remain a dynamic forum for the study of the art, architecture, and archaeology of the Islamic world.

Massumeh Farhad, PhD (Harvard), 1987, joined the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in 1995 as associate curator of Islamic art. In 2004, she was appointed chief curator and curator of Islamic art. She is a specialist in the arts of the book from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iran. She also has curated numerous exhibitions on the arts of the Islamic world at the Freer and Sackler, including *Art of the Persian Courts* (1996), *Fountains of Light: The Nuhad Es-Said Collection of Metalwork* (2000), *Style and Status: Imperial Costumes from Ottoman Turkey* (2005–2006), *Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin* (2009), *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (2009), and most recently, *Feast Your Eyes: A Taste for Luxury in Ancient Iran* (2012). She has written extensively on seventeenth-century Persian painting, including *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites in Safavid Iran* (2004) and *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (2009). E-mail: farhama@si.edu

Marianne Shreve Simpson, PhD (Harvard), 1978, formerly curator of Islamic Near Eastern art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, is an independent scholar of Islamic art and president of the Historians of Islamic Art Association (2011–13). She is the author of *The Illustration of an Epic: The Earliest Shahnama Manuscripts* (1979), *Arab and Persian Painting in the Fogg Art Museum* (1980), *L'Art de l'Islam en Asie* (1983), *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's "Haft Awrang": A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran* (1997, in collaboration with Massumeh Farhad), *Persian Poetry, Painting and Patronage: Illustrations in a Sixteenth-Century Masterpiece* (1998), and more than sixty scholarly articles and reviews. She also served as coeditor, with Herbert Kessler, of *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (1985). She currently is coediting a volume of *Shahnama* essays. E-mail: shrevesimpson@gmail.com

OLEG GRABAR AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Oleg Grabar. Courtesy Institute
for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ.
Photo by Cliff Moore.

In the spring of 2003, the University of Michigan awarded Oleg Grabar (1929–2011) the degree of doctor of humane letters. This honorary degree acknowledged not only his preeminence as a scholar of Islamic arts but also his extraordinary significance to the missions of the university.

Oleg began his career at Michigan, teaching in the Department of the History of Art from 1954 until 1968, the year he accepted a post at Harvard University. Stepping into the first academic position specializing in Islamic art in the United States, he transformed the program's scope and impact.¹ Through his charismatic capacity to excite all levels of audiences, he developed the fledgling field of Islamic material and visual culture right here in Michigan. Indeed, he was the “prince of Ann Arbor” during this era, noted his friend and colleague Jacob Lassner during the American Oriental Society's 2011 tribute to Grabar.² He trained more than sixty PhDs at Michigan and Harvard, and they have fanned out around the world in museums and academic positions, energizing sequential successive generations of specialists.

At Michigan, he inaugurated many research initiatives, which blossomed later into paradigm-shifting studies. Exhibitions, epigraphic studies, codicological investigations, text and image questions, architectural and archaeological fieldwork were all within his purview and the scope of his massive energies.³ A few examples are listed here: *Persian Art before and after the Mongol Conquest*, the 1959 exhibition at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, was the first effort to gather the pages of the dispersed the great Ilkhanid *Shahnama*.⁴ The 1965 exhibition *Sasanian Silver* addressed the nature of late antique and early medieval court cultures, diplomatic gifts, and the massive finds of Sasanian and Soghdian silver within the territories of the former Russian empire.⁵ Close readings of the history of structure were first addressed in seminars on Seljuk architecture,⁶ while analyses of architectural ornament developed the interpretations of intention.⁷

As a member of the Michigan faculty, he was on the editorial board of *Ars Orientalis*, where he published key studies on the Dome of the Rock and the *Maqāmāt* illustrative cycle, and also provided shorter notes and review articles. Michigan's close ties to the Freer meant that Oleg could hold regular graduate seminars with Richard Ettinghausen on the Gallery's stellar collection of Islamic art. This collaboration is also reflected in their eventual coauthored volume in the Pelican series, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650–1250*.⁸

He also was an associate of the university's Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, through which he was provided with an unrivalled opportunity to extend his field experience. Oleg's dissertation had focused on Umayyad sites, and he continued his intensive art historical and historical studies and fieldwork by focusing on the Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qusayr Amra' paintings as well as the Haram al-Sharif and



Oleg Grabar on location in Afghanistan, 1973. From the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ. Photo by Deborah Klimburg-Salter [FAC GRA 006].

the Dome of the Rock. In 1956, the Kelsey Museum's director, George H. Forsyth, Jr., took a small group of colleagues on a reconnaissance expedition to the Middle East in search of good sites for excavation. Among them was the young Oleg. The group explored five countries, traveling along dusty desert tracks. While Forsyth settled on the famous Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai for his own multiyear project, Oleg fixed upon the dramatic and extensive ruins east of Palmyra, currently called Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi, in Syria. When he first came upon the site, its majestic ramparts beckoned with promises of another decorated Umayyad villa. The excavations eventually revealed that the site, located strategically in the semi-arid region between the Euphrates and Damascus at the foot of a key mountain pass, was much more complex in its intention, uses, and subsequent history. A fortified agricultural and commercial installation with an elaborate water-management system and an external reception hall and bath, it flourished through the eighth century, suffered destruction in a tenth-century earthquake, enjoyed a renewal in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, and then was abandoned by the fourteenth century in the wake of the Mongol destruction of its trade partners in the region and on the Euphrates. The expedition's findings gave Oleg the opportunity to redefine the nature of Umayyad, Abbasid, and later archaeology in the Middle East. He reframed the focus on long-term regional, social, and commercial networks and the nature of daily life at a typical medieval site. In doing so, he issued a challenge to archaeologists, which has been taken up by many in the ensuing decades.

Oleg worked at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi for five seasons between 1964 and 1971, publishing numerous preliminary reports and an extensive interpretive article in *Ars Orientalis* 8 (1970). He maintained his connection with Michigan through that archaeological effort after he moved to Harvard. He went on to publish a two-volume monograph on the site, *City in the Desert: Qar al-Hayr East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), with Renata Holod, James Knudstad, and William Trousdale.⁹

When Oleg returned to Ann Arbor in 2003 with his wife, Terry, his colleagues in the Department of the History of Art and at the Kelsey Museum had a wonderful time renewing old ties and forging new ones. On the agenda were witty conversation and good food and drink, and we brainstormed about a possible new project to annotate and publish the archives of the Qasr al-Hayr excavations. We hope that this can still happen, with Oleg's fervent blessing!

Margaret Cool Root, PhD (Bryn Mawr College), 1976, is professor of classical and Near Eastern art/archaeology in the Department of the History of Art and the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology as well as curator of Near Eastern archaeology at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is author of several monographs beginning with *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (1979), editor of others, and has written many scholarly articles on problems in the art archaeology of ancient Iran and the larger Mediterranean cultural environment. She is currently completing volumes 2 and 3 of *Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets* with coauthor M. B. Garrison. E-mail: mcroot@umich.edu

NOTES

- 1 The first holder of the position was Mehmet Aga-Oglu, who held it from 1933 to 1938; he was followed by Richard Ettinghausen and David Storm Rice. Oleg Grabar was first appointed to a position split between the Near Eastern Studies and the History of Art departments.
- 2 I thank Professor Lassner for sharing the text of this address and giving me permission to use it. I also extend profound thanks to Renata Holod for her generous help on this essay, not least in glossing it with additions informed by her own time as an MA student at Michigan under Grabar, her continued PhD studies in Islamic architecture with him at Harvard, and her multi-season team membership on his Michigan-sponsored excavation (see below).
- 3 The generous teacher and mentor that he was, Oleg Grabar left a carefully arranged legacy of all his articles in four collected volumes: *Constructing the Study of Islamic Art* (Ashgate Variorum, 2005), available for download at www.archnet.org. Volume 4 contains a bibliography of his work up to 2004, and an update can be found in *Muqarnas* 25.
- 4 The investigations of these periods resulted in his redefinition of Seljuk and Ilkhanid art and architecture, published in 1967 as "The Visual Arts 1050–1350" in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, and the first data collection on Persian painting carried out under his direction by J. Norgren and E. Davis, *Preliminary Index of Shah-nameh Illustrations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969) as well as in the subsequent study he coauthored with Sheila Blair, *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- 5 He discussed some of these concerns more fully in *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, rev. 1987).
- 6 His method of architectural investigation and analysis is best summarized in *The Great Mosque of Isfahan* (New York: New York University Press, 1990).
- 7 Subsequently developed in *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) and in *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 8 Grabar's early draft on the architecture was completed at Michigan by 1965, and was circulated among his students as a mimeographed copy. The completed first edition did not appear until 1987, more than a decade after Richard Ettinghausen's death in 1975.
- 9 *Editor's note:* After he left Michigan, Oleg Grabar had a long and distinguished career, writing numerous books and hundreds of articles. He also was the founding editor of the journal *Muqarnas*. In 1980 he was named the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at Harvard University, retiring from there ten years later to join the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton.

THE LANGUAGE OF OBJECTS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD: HOW WE TRANSLATE AND INTERPRET IT

*Commentary on the symposium roundtable "Objects of and in Islamic History
and Culture"*

Moderator: Marianna S. Simpson

Participants:

Lisa Golombek, University of Toronto (emerita) and Royal Ontario
Museum (emerita)

Oya Pancaroğlu, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul

Oliver Watson, Oxford University (previously Museum of Islamic Art, Doha)

Stefan Weber, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Pergamonmuseum, Berlin

This roundtable discussion was based on the premise that within the study of the Islamic arts of the object, a great deal is known about materials, techniques, and methods of manufacture; period and regional styles and production centers; typologies of form, decoration, and function, and to a somewhat lesser degree, the identification of makers, patrons, and consumers; the interpretation of singular objects; and the evaluation of groups or types of objects from particular places and periods. Given all this information, have we reached the position where we can now deal with questions of motivation behind the making of the object, the aesthetic value of objects, and the extent to which a class of objects represents a "unique" achievement? Or to put it another way, are we now up to the task as defined so cogently by Oleg Grabar in his seminal 1976 article "The Arts of the Object": "[The] true challenge [in the study of Islamic objects] lies in discovering the motivations behind a unique artistic achievement which succeeded in lifting all its techniques and almost all its subjects to the level of works of art, and in the process endowed nearly all aspects of life with beauty and pleasure."¹

This commentary on the roundtable discussion, including the panelists' remarks and audience comments, can be divided into two groups. The first encompasses questions about the phenomenon of the object and problems posed by its inherent nature. The second concerns approaches to the display of Islamic objects.

Problems in Understanding the Object

Lisa Golombek initiated the discussion by calling for an awareness of the "laws of behavior" of diverse media. Different valuations were attached to different media; thus, we must know the *modus operandi* of the medium—the constraints of its production, the accessibility of materials, how artisans worked (alone, in groups, under direction), and the specific marketplace for that medium. How portable was the medium? Could it have served to spread ideas? To answer these questions, we need a representative database, one culled from as many collections (public, private, and archaeological) as possible.

One of the key questions for Grabar was the determination of an object's "social index." For whom was it made? Sometimes this information is conveniently written somewhere—in inscriptions or texts—but more often we have to make intelligent guesses. With enough data we can place an object within the pecking order or hierarchy by identifying the "knock-offs." When arranging objects for display, we definitely should not neglect or reject the "knock-offs": they help to confirm which superior objects were impressive to viewers not only today but also in the past. Golombek's favorite "indexed series" is the so-called Kubachi blue-and-white wares from Safavid Iran, since they signal the importance of finer Kirman chinoiserie wares. Although seventeenth-century "Kubachi" wares are poorly painted, they may have been considered "beautiful" in their day because they made generous use of a gorgeous cobalt blue.

Once we know something about the "social index" of a particular medium, we then can better understand its "laws of behavior." From there we may begin to ask whether the arts of the Islamic object behave any differently than those of other cultures. For example, does the detachment of most Islamic objects from religious involvement make them very different in their reception by Islamic society than, say, Christian objects within medieval Europe?

Oliver Watson pointed out that, from the information standpoint, we lack the kind of documentation—for instance, factory and individual archives relating to the production and consumption of objects—that survives in Europe from Renaissance times onwards, nor do we have a literature of connoisseurship in the Islamic world comparable, say, to that of China. Thus, we depend on the object, which has its own technical and stylistic history, to tell us about its production and use. We need to know how to examine objects closely and retrieve information from various perspectives.

At the level of the individual object, this is what we see magisterially performed by D. S. Rice in his studies of metalwork² and by Julian Raby, who re-examined much of the same material in his symposium opening address on "The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of the 'Mosul School of Metalwork.'" We might be able, however, to extend further the study of individual objects by trying to understand in more detail the nature of the enterprise in which the makers of our arts were engaged. Two issues come to mind: the implications about how craftsmen worked, and the reliability of the surviving sample.

1. What is a "workshop"?

What does a pottery workshop or an individual metalworker need in order to be able to work? By this is meant not only the different materials and technologies used directly by metalworkers or potters, but also equally importantly are the "support"

industries needed for their particular enterprise and the required social and economic environment. Ceramics require an enormous pyramid of trades and skills to allow a fine luxury object worthy of the name of “art” to be produced: sourcing and preparation of body, glaze, and pigment materials, the making of tools, the provisions and skills related to the construction and operation of kilns, and the means of transport to market. Thus, the transfer of a luxury pottery type (such as lustreware), even into areas where there was an already established high-level industry, required time and money.³

Similar conclusions might be drawn about cast-metal technologies, although the question arises as to whether the movements of purely decorative technologies (such as inlaying brass with copper and silver) are as complex as those of ceramics. Might the ability of such crafts to migrate easily explain the proliferation of production centers for Mosuli metalworkers and provide an “excluded middle” from the choice that we otherwise seem to face, that is, a single center supplying a vast area, or an implausible number of competing centers?⁴

2. Survival

We naturally try to make sense of the material (i.e., objects) we have. It is salutary and sobering, however, to estimate now and again whether the material we have can reasonably sustain the weight of interpretation we impose upon it. Are the patterns we see in the surviving material a real reflection of their history, or are they chance patterns created by the vagaries of survival?

In the case of Mosuli metalworkers, we might estimate that over the course of a century many thousands of fine metal pieces were made. (If roughly a dozen craftsmen each produced twelve pieces a year, this results in some 1,500 pieces a decade and 15,000 over the century.) The couple of hundred pieces that actually survive to our day represent just one or two percent of this total. How reliable is this sample? To answer this, we must take an interest in how and why things do survive, which is another subject ripe for research. It is immediately apparent that different materials and objects survive at various rates. To consider this, we must look to the recyclability of material, the rarity or expense of objects, and the existence of institutions dedicated to looking after things (e.g., libraries, treasuries, shrines, palaces, and nowadays also museums).

Since Muslims do not bury goods with the dead, the enormous riches of tomb-finds in pharaonic Egypt, ancient China, and the classical world are not available to us. The vagaries of political history have meant that, for the most part, the fabulous libraries and treasuries of Islamic dynasties down through the centuries have been dispersed or destroyed. We are left with the Topkapı Saray in Istanbul—important as holding the remnants of the treasury, library, and palace collections of one of the

world's richest imperial powers—but this repository is significant for more than the fabulous objects it contains. Its vast collection provides an indication of the enormous quantity of objects and the extraordinary wide range of materials and objects types that made up the categories of so-called Islamic court arts through the centuries, the overwhelmingly large part of which is now lost. An important question that remains is how to incorporate this observation into the histories we now try to construct.

Oya Pancaroğlu pointed out another fact about three-dimensional objects that affects our ability to understand them: the difference between studying objects and studying manuscripts or architecture. The difference begins at the point of looking. We can see an object at once, but we cannot see a book or a building at once. Books and buildings require multiple, linked views, and it is only after the accumulation of a multiplicity of views that we can securely say we have seen this book or that building. This necessary effort almost automatically lends a depth of perspective. As an extended experience, the processes of looking and seeing also reinforce the thinking process. At the very least, there is an extension into the text of the book and therefore into a literary realm. In the case of buildings, the thinking process extends itself to numerous avenues ranging from epigraphy and function to social history and patronage.

With an object, we might have to handle it, turn it around, consider its technique of production, and so forth, but the process is rarely as extended or extensive as it is in the case of manuscripts or buildings. Pancaroğlu thought this manner of relating to objects, as opposed to manuscripts and buildings, is somewhat of a disadvantage because it reduces the depth of perspective. The object is right there in front of us—“in your face.” What more could there be to the object?

Stefan Weber felt that, next to their materiality and technical quality, objects are part of systems, social systems, that must be understood if we are to grasp the meaning of any single object in terms of its aesthetic and social value.⁵ First and foremost, they belong in a setting, such as the Aleppo Room in Berlin's Pergamon-museum. This early-seventeenth-century room from the house of a Christian merchant who lived in Aleppo must have been filled with objects that shared the same visual language as the paintings on the walls and ceiling. Objects are never alone. As products of their time and place, they are a nonverbal form of communication about and within that society. Sources to investigate beyond the object are gift lists, heritage records, archaeological contexts, poetry, and anything that might increase knowledge about the object.

Displaying Islamic Art in the Museum

Remarks and questions from the symposium audience focused on what we want objects in a museum gallery or installation to tell visitors. Several comments dealt with the appreciation of Arabic calligraphy. While translating the text may enhance understanding an object (e.g., a Koran page), it does not necessarily speak to the beauty of the calligraphy.

At this point the discussion turned to the question of value, a question that affects both the study of objects and their presentation. In general the panelists felt it is important to display objects that range in quality, not just those that are unique or exceptional pieces, in order to present a more complete picture of the society and of the place that the unique piece holds among its lesser “siblings.” For example, sixteenth-century illustrated manuscripts from Shiraz have long been considered “provincial,”⁶ but by whose standards? What features are missing from such works that are manifest, for instance, in court manuscripts? Which features could museum visitors recognize and distinguish? More expansive and flexible installations, such as the open-storage displays at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, allow the curator to try a different approach by showing, for instance, the full range of a genre’s production.

Moving from the objects privileged in most museum galleries to the less displayable category of the archaeological object, Pancaroğlu pointed out that such works are not as “in your face.” Each comes with a context and requires other types of resources to understand it. The question then arose, what can an art historian bring to archaeology? Perhaps one approach is to differentiate objects, such as identifying a work that might be considered an “heirloom.” Weber raised as an example a blue-and-white sherd found at the Dome of the Rock, which represents many stories associated with this site.⁷ Watson pointed out art history does have a different set of questions than archaeology.

As the discussion drew to a close, Weber mentioned that we had not yet considered the secondary history of objects (the “biography of objects”), that is, what happened to them after they left their original owners. Speaking from the audience, Sheila Canby of the Metropolitan Museum of Art noted the defacement of paintings as well as the many notations (sometimes resembling graffiti) written on the flyleaves of manuscripts. As objects (as well as manuscripts and buildings) are handed down to subsequent generations, their meanings and functions change. A plea was made for the inclusion of such information (former owners, dealers, etc.) in online databases.

Finally, it would seem appropriate here to return to the questions raised by Oleg Grabar. To what extent have we become more knowledgeable about the role of objects in the Islamic world? Are we able to muster evidence backing claims of

uniqueness or specialness about certain individual objects? It seems that as data, generated by both the object and its social context, accumulates, we can begin to make such assertions. It is clear, however, that the object alone is insufficient. It must be probed, and its circumstances of production as well as its place among its many siblings (most of which have disappeared) must be taken into consideration. With the growth of the field and the increasing specialization of knowledge-seeking (not only by medium, geography, and chronology but also by disciplines, such as paleography, petrography, poetry, etc.), our appreciation of the object will only become more defined and refined. When Grabar first raised such issues in 1976, the field of Islamic art history was very young. It has grown exponentially, and if objects are the last horizon (following architecture and painting), they are rapidly catching up. The expansion of museum and public collections has certainly been a catalyst in moving our research forward. The consensus of the roundtable discussion was that displays of Islamic art must convey not only the beauty of the object but also its complexity.

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NOTES

- 1 Oleg Grabar, "The Arts of the Object," *Artforum* 14 (1976), p. 43.
- 2 Although now challenged, D. S. Rice's work on medieval inlaid metalwork is still unparalleled for its attention to detail, which is beautifully documented in his photographs and drawings. See, for example, Rice, *Le Baptistère de Saint-Louis* (Paris: Les Editions du Chénes, 1951); Rice, "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmed al-Dhaki al-Mawsi-li," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 283–326.
- 3 Watson had in mind the transfer of the lustre technique to Egypt in the tenth century and the subsequent transfer of frit-based ceramics and new decorative techniques eastwards from Egypt in the twelfth century.
- 4 See Ruba Kana'an's article "Patron and Craftsman of the Freer Mosul Ewer of 1232" in this volume.
- 5 For a thoughtful discussion of this point, see Stefan Weber, "A Concert of Things: Thoughts on Objects of Islamic Art in the Museum Context," in B. Junod, G. Khalil, S. Weber, and G. Wolf, *Islamic Art and the Museum: Discussions on Scientific and Museological Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World*, Proceedings of the Berlin Symposium (London: Saqi Books, forthcoming).
- 6 This attitude now has been persuasively contested by Lale Uluç, *Turkman governors, Shiraz artisans, and Ottoman collectors: Sixteenth century Shiraz manuscripts* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006).
- 7 According to Weber, the excavations at Suq al-Sagha of the Umayyad palace of Mu'awiya south of the Aqsa Mosque yielded Mamluk blue-and-white sherds.



A POETIC VESSEL FROM EVERYDAY LIFE: THE FREER INCENSE BURNER

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Metal incense burner, 8th–9th century. H: 31.5 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, F1952.1.

Abstract

The Freer incense burner (Freer Gallery of Art, F1952.1) is an enigmatic and hybrid object that simultaneously presents architectural features and serves as a vessel for domestic use. The incorporation of architectural features in a utilitarian object is a universal and well-known phenomenon that is usually loaded with meaning. With our object, however, the message and purpose are unclear. Furthermore, the vessel's origin is obscure; although generally considered Islamic, it also has been said to have been produced along the borders between pre-Islamic and Islamic cultures. This essay reexamines the Freer incense burner as a visual metaphor; it focuses on actual and metaphorical process of borrowing architectural elements in both objects and literary arts, specifically poetry, of the Islamic world.

THE FREER GALLERY OF ART'S INCENSE BURNER (fig. 1)¹ is a metal vessel that incorporates distinct architectural components. In this respect, it belongs to a large group of objects, spanning a wide time range, whose features have been borrowed from architecture. Such objects reflect a universal phenomenon that has existed in numerous cultures and time periods. Yet virtually nothing is known about the Freer object. It has no inscriptions, and there is no solid evidence concerning the place or date of its creation. Indeed, there has been much speculation regarding its origin. Although it is usually described as Islamic, a strain of doubt hovers over this identification. Some scholars believe the incense burner was produced along the borders between Islamic and Byzantine or pre-Islamic cultures and has no specific cultural or stylistic domain.² It appears that the inability to determine its exact origin has reduced its value and has led to its neglect.

In this article, I reexamine the duality of the incense burner's design—as a representation of fragmentary architecture and as a vessel—in order to find the cultural mechanism that created it. To accomplish this, I will look for literary references to architecture in poetry, where metaphorical borrowing frequently occurred, to find common characteristics that might shed some light on the Freer object.

The incense burner is a square metal object whose upper part comprises five domes—a large central one and four smaller ones on the corners (fig. 2)—that are surrounded by two tiers of graded crenellations. Each dome is adorned with pierced floral and geometric motifs and originally housed a figure of a bird as well. The domes stand upon a flat lid that is connected to the object by two hinges. The lower part of the incense burner is a square body pierced by a pattern of diagonal crisscrosses. In addition, there are four legs, each one adorned with animal masks and paws, and a long horizontal handle, terminating in a kneeling quadruped.³

This brief description of the vessel does not leave any place for doubt about its connection to architecture. It also provides a prominent sense of a hybrid object. A quick review suggests that there are two methods of applying architectural features to objects. In the first, the object resembles a miniature version of a habitable building. In the second, it includes several fragmentary architectural features, such as domes and crenellations, but does not have other fundamental components, such as columns, towers, gates, and openings.

The Freer object belongs to the second method: objects that employ fragmentary architectural features. Within this group there are many incense burners,⁴ none of which bear distinctive cultural “signs,” such as an apse or *mīhrāb* (prayer niche), yet they are all “suspected” to be Islamic.⁵ Although some share more features than others, none are completely identical in shape (see fig. 3). They also do not look like miniature versions of actual buildings, which has proved confusing to scholars who seek to determine the Freer incense burner’s origin based on its architectural features.⁶ The wide range of suggested models extends from Central Asian buildings, such as the mausoleum of Ismail at Bukhara,⁷ a Soghdian structure,⁸ and a Buddhist stupa,⁹ to Coptic¹⁰ and Byzantine models.¹¹ These efforts expose the problems that may occur when examining an object using a strictly East/West, Islam/Byzantium methodology.¹² Indeed, there might be no specific model for these objects. Their architectural elements can be considered universal, because they do not display specific stylistic features. Furthermore, because these objects are usually ascribed to pre-Mongol conquests, scholars tend to see in their designs traces of pre-Islamic cultures that existed in both the East and the West.¹³

The uncertainty over the cultural identity of the Freer and similar incense burners led me to examine the concept of borrowing in art, specifically in Arabic poetry, where the use of metaphors was extensive. In fact, metaphors were a major element in medieval Arabic poetry and language. I will begin by showing that the Freer vessel is a visual metaphor that shares characteristics with the literary metaphor.

The term “metaphor” derives from Greek, and its initial and narrow meaning was the transference or replacement of a notion from one domain to another.¹⁴ The closest term in Arabic is *استعارة* *isti‘āra* (borrowing), but there are additional terms, such as *مثل* *mathal* (likeness), *تمثيل* *tamthīl* (analogy), or *تشبيه* *tashbīh* (simile), that demonstrate the tendency to broaden the boundaries of the definition.¹⁵ Some of these terms appeared as early as the eighth century in texts by medieval Muslim writers¹⁶ and literary critics and also in Koranic exegesis.¹⁷ Medieval texts do not always produce a clear distinction between the various meanings of these terms, which sometimes has led to disputes between scholars in both the medieval and modern periods.¹⁸ However, the texts do confirm that, in medieval Islamic society, the pursuit of these issues was intense. I contend that this tendency was not restricted to



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Detail of fig. 1, the domes
and crenellations on the
Freer incense burner.

the literary world and may have triggered the creation of visual metaphors.

Each component of a literary and visual composition acts in accordance with the distinctive rules of each respective art form, and is affected by diverse factors such as time, space, or grammar. The differences between art forms have to be considered when making comparisons. Carroll,¹⁹ for example, stipulates that the shift from a literary to a visual metaphor begins with the creation of a concrete composite object that has a coherent contour and encloses homogeneous space. According to Carroll, such conditions bridge the gap between different art forms²⁰ and make the comparison possible. These conditions are clearly manifested in the Freer vessel, which meets the definition of a visual metaphor.

ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (a grammarian and a theorist of Arabic literature who died in 1078) was probably the first to discern the nuances within the Arabic definitions for metaphor.²¹ According to al-Jurjānī, it was precisely the apparent differences between the referred elements that fascinated people.²² This fascination became the desired goal of the metaphor, and is also found in the dissimilarity between the architectural and utilitarian components of the Freer object. Although Muslim writers used linguistic terms in their definitions, those terms portrayed broad concepts that mirrored each artist or poet's profound and imaginative internal thinking process.²³ Therefore, it is hard to decipher the connections that were conceived in the creator's imagination.²⁴ Yet, similar to the literary metaphor in which the reader is asked to understand an idea through its components, we are also required to perceive the Freer object through its architectural elements.

Architecture has qualities that last beyond specific period, place, or function. These qualities include universal, psychological, and spiritual ideas, such as magnificence, beauty, power, stability, order, protection, etc.²⁵ Similar qualities can be



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Metal incense burner, 10th–11th
century. H: 14.5 cm. The Nasser
D. Khalili Collection, MTW 1065.
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found in literary metaphors written by Muslim poets over the course of time. Vildan Serdaroglu, for example, has shown that Ottoman poets often portrayed lovers using architectural metaphors that expressed beauty and dignity.²⁶ Earlier poets, such as ‘Ali ibn al-Djahm (died 863), al-Buhturī (died 897), Ibn al-Mu’tazz (died 908), and Abū-Nuwās (died circa 814), saw architecture as representing a silent memory of glorious past and a commemoration of its patrons’ power. To others, such as Nāsir-i Khusrau (died circa 1072), architecture was an expression of order and symmetry that reflected the cosmic order.²⁷ A verse from one of his poems states:

... A palace of my poem I’ll make, in which
from its verses I’ll form flower beds and verandas.
One spot I’ll raise up like a lofty prospect,
Another make wide and spacious like a courtyard.
At its gate, some rarity of meter
I’ll set, trusty and wise, to be its gateman ...²⁸

In these lines, Nāsir-i Khusrau indicates that construction and poem, building and writing, are one and the same.

The use of metaphors in these early poems resembles a mosaic: fragments combined to produce a layered picture. However, the poems do not offer coherent, detailed descriptions of the buildings themselves.²⁹ Khusrau’s poem, for example, does not provide a clear sense of the palace’s shape or size. Even the gate, which appears to be a significant feature, is not described in detail. Instead, these poems relate to architectural elements that help recall memories and feelings. By focusing on domes and other architectural elements, poets activated their readers’ imaginations. Furthermore, the meaning becomes clear only by tracking the poem’s central theme, tying its pieces together like a string connects pearls to form a necklace.³⁰ This formal construction of an Arabic poem has been defined by some modern scholars as “atomic” or “molecular,”³¹ words that instantly recall the connections between the domes and crenellations on the Freer incense burner. But, unlike the

literary metaphor, our object is like a pearl separated from its necklace; it has no text and is taken out of context.

Arabic literary metaphors³² were also derived from other visual arts, such as goldsmithing, weaving, and painting.³³ Arab poets clearly demonstrated a great appreciation for both literary and visual works of art and indeed regarded borrowed elements as magnificent creations in themselves. Thus, their literary metaphors comprised components from various non-art fields as well.³⁴ However, the elements that were derived from the visual arts play multiple roles in poetry, shaping and unifying the text through the “rules of construction” that exist in both visual and literary works.³⁵ In fact, both types of art require a careful selection of fragmentary components and demand a meticulous and formal adjustment of their parts in order to produce an organized and harmonic unit.³⁶ Thus, similar to a metaphor’s function in a poem, the architectural elements on the Freer incense burner provide a sense of order and symmetry. Moreover, the rules of construction in visual and literary metaphors are in fact threads that tie together diverse types of cultural expression,³⁷ whether they were used by poets or visual artists.

Some scholars have raised the idea of shared rules existing for different media in Islamic art, such as glazed ceramics featuring excerpts from the *Shahnama* and visual images appearing on objects. Simpson, for example, points to one mechanism that abbreviated both images and text.³⁸ We might also recall the ongoing efforts to “read” the Alhambra palace in Granada, where verses of poems and patterns of ornament decorate the walls.³⁹

Clearly, underlying all these efforts is the concept that there are rules for activating various types of cultural “signs.” The connections between the visual and written arts as well as the rules that govern them indicate that a deep significance is given to formal values within Islam. Structural, formal, and aesthetic values receive more emphasis than the content itself. These connections also bring to mind the fluid boundaries that exist between content and shape in Arabic poetry and visual art.⁴⁰ This partially explains our inability to understand the meaning of connecting architectural elements with a utensil. However, it does explain the cultural background that activated the borrowing of elements in Islamic art.

I would like to emphasize two points: first, metaphors and architectural descriptions were widely used in Arabic poetry during pre-Islamic times. But during the Abbasid period, there were significant innovations in that area. Innovations of new types of metaphors, such as the *badiʿ* (new style),⁴¹ and literary genres, such as the *wasf* (description), reached their peak in the eleventh century.⁴² Underlying these developments was the significant role Arabic played in preserving the traditional wording in the Koran.⁴³ The cultural atmosphere, which seemed secular but in actual fact was not at all so, became a greenhouse for the growth of figurative lan-

guage loaded with metaphors. This atmosphere was reflected in various activities, such as gifts presented with short poems, diverse types of objects inscribed with poetic verses,⁴⁴ and the *maʿānī* (guidebooks), which included motifs, idioms, and phrases arranged in themes⁴⁵ and were like a “thesaurus of ornate combinations” for poets, writers, and clerks.⁴⁶ These books demonstrate that poets were deeply influenced by their predecessors and became formative factors in everyday life. While such books and objects revealed the connections between art forms, they also showed an extensive interest in the Arabic language in general, and in poetry in particular—not only in courts or educated circles but in all segments of the population. They inspired and influenced Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Wasserstein, for example, points to the quick expansion of Arabic language and mentions the Abbasid translation “enterprise” that turned Greek and Latin into unessential languages.⁴⁷ Thus, Arabic language and literature played magnetic and powerful roles in medieval Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Metaphorical language became a natural verbal currency in everyday life and thought in Islamic lands. It unified the entire population, creating a close contact between the literary and visual realms in Islamic art.

Like literary metaphors, the architectural elements found on the Freer incense burner and similar objects are neither specific nor distinctive. This helps explain their elusive character and the difficulty in determining their origin. While the objects “speak” a universal language, the metaphorical process enables us to read, interpret, and experience them individually and freely. Thus, they might have appealed and belonged to different ethnic groups under Islamic rule.

In conclusion, the Freer incense burner is a visual metaphor that unites utensil and architecture. Its junction point reveals a twofold meaning. One points to the meeting between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds as represented by architectural components and the function of the vessel itself. This creates an additional link in a chain of complex umbilical connections between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures, based on popular norms that prevailed during the early centuries of Islam. The second level exposes the enormous importance given to the Arabic language and poetry as fundamental factors in this culture. This spiritual and cultural world could have affected both the verbal and the visual language, producing one mechanism for both. Thus, the cultural roots inserted in the metaphorical mechanism convert the Freer incense burner from a hybrid object into a poetic one.

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NOTES

- 1 Purchase, F1952.1, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Maximum height: 31.5 cm; maximum width, including horizontal handle: 40.8 cm.
- 2 Esin Atil, W. T. Chase and Paul. Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1985), pp. 58–61; Esin Atil, *Art of the Arab World* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1975), pp. 28–29
- 3 Atil, Chase, and Jett, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 58–61. Atil, *Art of the Arab World*, pp. 28–29.
- 4 Examples include: Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, inv. no. I1301; see Heinrich Gluck, *Die Kunst des Islam* (Berlin: Propylaen, 1925), p. 438. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, inv. nos. MTW1065, MTW I417; see M. B. Piotrovsky, ed., *Heavenly Art Earthly Beauty* (Amsterdam: De Nieuwe Kerk, 1999), nos. 183 and 184. Tarek Rajab Museum, Kuwait, inv. nos. MET-2375-TSR, MET-1284-TSR; see Geza Fehérvári, “Islamic Incense-burners and the Influence of Buddhist Art,” in *The Iconography of Islamic Art*, ed. Bernard O’Kane (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), figs. 8.5, 8.10. Kuwait National Museum, inv. no. LNS 41 M; see Marilyn Jenkins, ed., *Islamic Art in the Kuwait National Museum: The al-Sabah Collection* (London: Sotheby Publications and P. Wilson, 1983), p. 40.
- 5 It is generally accepted by scholars of Islamic art that these objects were produced by Muslim metalworkers or workshops, although there is no clear-cut evidence.
- 6 Atil, Chase, and Jett, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 58–61. Eva Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 46–50. J. W. Allan, *Metalwork of the Islamic World: The Aron Collection* (London: Sotheby’s, 1986), p. 26.
- Fehérvári, “Islamic Incense-burners,” pp. 127–141.
- 7 Allan, *Aron Collection*, p. 26. Fehérvári, “Islamic Incense-burners,” p. 129.
- 8 Baer, *Metalwork in Medieval Islamic Art*, pp. 48–49.
- 9 Fehérvári, “Islamic Incense-burners,” pp. 127–41.
- 10 Allan, *Aron Collection*, p. 26.
- 11 Allan, *Aron Collection*, p. 26. Atil, Chase, and Jett, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 58–61. Atil, *Art of the Arab World*, p. 28.
- 12 Eva Hoffman describes this concept in “Between East and West: The Wall Paintings on Samarra and the Construction of Abbasid Princely Culture,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008), pp. 107–132.
- 13 See the references to cylindrical incense burners in M. Aga-Oglu, “About a Type of Islamic Incense Burner,” *The Art Bulletin* 27 (March 1945), pp. 28–45. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8–18th Centuries* (London: H.M.S.O., 1982), pp. 31–32.
- 14 For the classical definition, see Aristotle, *Poetics*, Loeb Classical Library edition (Harvard: University Press, 1960), pp. xxi, 13–26.
- 15 W. P. Heinrichs, “Metaphor,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* 2 (1998), pp. 522–24. S. A. Bonebakker, “Isti’āra,” *Encyclopedia of Islam (EI)* 4 (1978), pp. 248–52.
- 16 Heinrichs mentions that Abu’Amr b. al-‘Ala’ (died 770) was the first to use the term *isti’āra*. W. P. Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Ges, 1977), pp. 10–11. See also Bonebakker, *EI*, pp. 248–52.
- 17 Bonebakker, *EI*, pp. 248–52.
- 18 J. S. Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 319–23. Heinrichs, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, pp. 522–24.

- 19 Noel Carroll, "Visual Metaphor," in *Aspects of Metaphor*, ed. Jaakko Hintikka (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), pp. 189–218.
- 20 Carroll has coined the term "homospaciality." Carroll, "Visual Metaphor," p. 198.
- 21 This evaluation of 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī is mentioned by several scholars. See, for example, Heinrichs, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, p. 524; Bonebakker, *EI*, pp. 248–52; Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meaning: Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1995), p. 10.
- 22 Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha*. Cited in Kamal Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979), p. 68.
- 23 See, for example, Larkin, *Theology of Meaning*, p. 60.
- 24 Abu Deeb *Al-Jurjānī's Theory*, p. 78.
- 25 See, for example, John Onians, "Architecture, Metaphor and the Mind," in *Architectural History* 35 (1992), pp. 192–207.
- 26 Vildan Serdaroglu, "When Literature and Architecture Met: Architectural Images of the Beloved and Lover in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Poetry," *Muqarnas* 23 (2006), pp. 273–88.
- 27 J. S. Meisami, "Symbolic Structure in a Poem by Nāsir-i Khusrau," in *Iran* 31 (1993), pp. 103–17. This idea is repeated in later poetry as well. See, for example, A. M. Sumi, "Poetry and Architecture: A Double Imitation in the Siniyyah of Ahmad Shawqī," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 39 (2008), pp. 72–122, esp. p. 75.
- 28 Translated by J. S. Meisami in *Structure and Meaning*, p. 16.
- 29 J. S. Meisami, "Palaces and Paradises: Palace Description in Medieval Persian Poetry," *Islamic Art and Literature*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robonson (Princeton: M. Wiener, 2001), p. 42. See also D. F. Ruggles, "Arabic Poetry and Architectural Memory," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993), pp. 171–78.
- 30 This is a recurring metaphor in classical Arabic poetry. Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, p. 13–15; A. J. Arbery, "Orient Pearls at Random Strung," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11 (1946), pp. 699–712; Joseph Sadan, "Maidens' Hair and Starry Skies," *Israel Oriental Studies* 11 (1991), pp. 57–88, esp. pp. 86–87.
- 31 Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 13–15.
- 32 It should be noted that Persian poetry is derived and developed from traditional Arabic poetry. See Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, p. 31.
- 33 J. W. Clinton, "Esthetics by Implication: What Metaphors of Craft Tell Us about the 'Unity' of the Persian Qasida," *Edebiyat* 4, no. 1 (1979), pp. 73–96; J. W. Clinton, "Image and Metaphor: Textiles in Persian Poetry," in *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart*, ed. C. Bier (Washington, DC: Textile Museum, 1987), pp. 1–7; Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 16–17.
- 34 This appreciation for diversity includes metaphors that were derived from nature, like flowers and animals, and can be seen in the Freer vessel itself, in the variety of animal images on its domes, legs, and handle.
- 35 Clinton, "Esthetics by Implication," pp. 73–96; Clinton, "Image and Metaphor," pp. 7–11; Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 16–17. Sadan, "Maidens' Hair," pp. 64–65.
- 36 Clinton, "Esthetics by Implication," pp. 73–96; Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 15–19.
- 37 See also D. K. Washburn, "Toward a Theory of Structural Style in Art," in *Structure and Cognition in Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–7.
- 38 M. S. Simpson, "Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects," in *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. H. L. Kessler and M. S. Simpson (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1985), pp. 131–49.
- 39 See, for example, O. Bush, "The Writing on the Wall: Reading the Decoration of the Alhambra," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009), pp. 119–47 and the bibliography; Valerie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris and Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001), pp. 60–62.
- 40 W. P. Heinrichs, "lafz and ma'nā" and "ma'nā," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, pp. 460–61, 504. Vicente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 46–54. Sadan, "Maidens' Hair," pp. 62–66.
- 41 For the exact designations, see W. P. Heinrichs, "badi," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, (London: Routledge, 1998), vol. 1, pp. 122–23.
- 42 Heinrichs, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, p. 523; A. Arazi, "wasf," *EI*, pp. 153–58.
- 43 Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, pp. 9–19.
- 44 For example, the gold wine bowl from the eleventh century in the British Museum, OA1938.11-12.1. See Rachel Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 56, fig. 38. For examples, see Richard Ettinghausen, "The Flowering of Seljuq Art," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970), pp. 113–31.
- 45 Sadan, "Maidens' Hair," pp. 70–71.
- 46 Sadan, "Maidens' Hair," p. 71.
- 47 D. J. Wasserstein, "Why Did Arabic Succeed Where Greek Failed? Language in the Near East after Muhammad," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 22 (2003), pp. 257–72.

SARACEN OR PISAN?

The Use and Meaning of the Pisa Griffin on the Duomo

Abstract

The largest surviving medieval Islamic bronze sculpture, known as the Pisa Griffin, was displayed on the Duomo in Pisa from the Middle Ages until 1828. While it might have been acquired during one of the Pisan campaigns against the Saracens, the traditional interpretation that it was displayed as war booty needs to be reconsidered. The Griffin was placed on the roof of the apse at a time when the Islamic world and the Latin West, despite many war episodes, had not yet been separated into two cultural and epistemological categories. There is little chance that, in the Middle Ages, the Griffin was perceived as a Saracen object whose exhibition would be a sign of Pisa's victory over the Saracens. It is more likely that the display of the sculpture on the Duomo obliterated its Islamic origins and reflected local cultural beliefs. During the same period, a griffin was made in Genoa for the Cathedral of San Lorenzo and an Islamic bronze falcon was transformed into a rooster and mounted on the apse of the church of San Frediano in Lucca. It is within this local context that the use of the Pisa Griffin on the Duomo should be examined.

AS SOON AS ONE HEARS ABOUT THE DISPLAY of the original bronze Griffin on the Duomo in medieval Pisa (see fig. 1), at the same position where its cement copy can be viewed today (fig. 2), the question arises: how did an Islamic object come to be exhibited on a Christian monument in such a prestigious and meaningful position—an act that would cause much controversy today? This question has attracted a lot of attention among historians of Pisa and specialists of Islamic art. It often has been said that the Griffin was displayed as war booty and provided a visual echo to the epigraphic inscriptions on the Duomo that celebrated the victories of the Pisans over the Saracens.¹ As a result, it is now considered a touchstone of the so-called cross-cultural relationships between Islam and the Latin West in the Middle Ages.² However, an important aspect of this question needs further study: could the Griffin even be considered Islamic, or more accurately Saracen, in medieval Pisa? This paper focuses on the ways in which the Griffin's display on the Duomo might have reflected the local culture, rather than stressed its origins, whether or not those could be known at the time.

Based on the Griffin's formal and stylistic features and after comparison with other bronze animals, recent studies have attributed its origins to al-Andalus (Islamic Spain), around the eleventh century.³ Produced (and probably used) somewhere in the Islamic world, it eventually reached Pisa at the latest in the fifteenth century or at the beginning of the sixteenth century, depending on the date of the first-known representation of the Griffin, a marquetry panel on a seat in the Duomo's chancel (fig. 1). In 1552, a new capital was made to support it.⁴ Until the



1

1
Marquetry panel showing the
Duomo and the bending tower of
Pisa, late 15th–early 16th century.
Photo from: <http://piazza.opapisa.it>
(accessed February 22, 2011).



2

2
Cement copy of the Griffin above
the apse of the Duomo. Photo taken
from the Leaning Tower of Pisa by
Ayse Ercan.

beginning of the nineteenth century, the Griffin was mentioned and depicted in various images and texts. At the end of the sixteenth century, it was described as an antique Egyptian bronze sculpture, partly because the Arabic inscription that runs around the object was thought to be hieroglyphs.⁵ In 1643, Paolo Tronci talked about a big and fierce animal that was caught in the woods and transformed into a bronze statue, thus describing the Griffin as a new Heifer of Myron.⁶ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Giuseppe Martini portrayed it as an animal of the Apocalypse, incorporating Christian symbolism.⁷ At the end of that century, Alessandro da Morrona became perhaps the first to climb the Duomo in order to examine the object closely and make a drawing of it (fig. 3). He didn't recognize the Arabic inscription and thought the "hippogriff" was Etruscan or a Roman replica of an Etruscan sculpture.⁸ This interpretation reflects the political and cultural tendency in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to praise Pisa as the legitimate rival of Rome throughout history. The Griffin was thought to be, as were the Duomo's antique columns and capitals, a monument that represented the city's glorious past. In 1812, another historian, Sebastiano Ciampi, rejected this interpretation and suggested a medieval Pisan origin.⁹ The Griffin was taken down that same year to be restored. It was exhibited in 1828 in the Camposanto, which was turned into a *museo civico*, a museum about Pisa.¹⁰ The Griffin was presented as a local work of art. Its "Oriental" character was discovered in 1829 by Michelangelo Lanci, who was the first to decipher the Arabic inscription.¹¹ A cross replaced the statue on the apse until 1934, the year a cement copy of the Griffin was made.¹² In 1986, the Griffin was displayed in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in a room that bears its name and is dedicated to objects of foreign origin.

Primary sources about the Pisa Griffin suggest a history of oblivion: no reference is made to its Islamic origins until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In addition, the object's cultural and political values have fluctuated considerably over time. These fluctuations happened in different contexts, and they now form layers



3
Ippogrifo di bronzo situato sul comignolo del Duomo di Pisa, verso Levante by Alessandro da Morrone. Drawing, late 18th century. After Alessandro Da Morrone, *Pisa Illustrata nelle Arti del Disegno* (Livorno: G. Marenigh, 1812), vol. 1.

that need to be excavated in order to sketch a “cultural biography,” as Igor Kopytoff has proposed.¹³ Two significant shifts have been revealed by two symmetrical “gestures” (in the Foucauldian meaning of an act that has deep epistemological implications). The first was the raising of the Griffin to the top of the Duomo, obliterating its Islamic origin at the same time. The second gesture took place centuries later: the relocation of the Griffin in the museum and the beginning of its re-Islamization. This paper focuses on the first of these gestures and seeks to answer the following questions: Under what circumstances did the Griffin arrive in Pisa? Why was it appreciated and adopted? How was it used and redefined?

In the absence of medieval sources that deal directly with the Griffin, it is necessary to consider the context in which the Pisans likely acquired this object. It must have arrived in Pisa during the city’s hegemony over Tuscany and the Mediterranean, i.e., the twelfth to the fourteenth century. There is no evidence that the city established any diplomatic or cordial relationships with the Islamic lands: therefore, it is unlikely that the Griffin was a gift. Perhaps it was bought by the Pisans. However, trade between Pisa and the Islamic world involved less precious and more common objects, such as the ceramic vessels called *bacini*.¹⁴ Most scholars believe that the Griffin was war booty, captured by the Pisans during one of their campaigns against the Saracens. Preference is given to the campaigns of the Balearic Islands, which took place between 1113 and 1115. One argument for this is the written sources that mention that war booty from that expedition was the main financial and decorative resource for the Duomo.¹⁵ It can be assumed, then, that the Griffin was set above the apse just before the Duomo’s consecration in 1118.

Does the assumption that the Griffin was war booty necessarily imply that it was used to show the supremacy of the Pisans over the Saracens? This presupposes that it was considered, appreciated, and exhibited as a Saracen object, a hypothesis that should not be dismissed.¹⁶ Still, the Griffin also reflected local beliefs. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault explains that during the Latin Middle Ages, knowledge was based on resemblance: people interpreted alien phenomena in terms of what was familiar.¹⁷ This statement can be used to describe the reactions of medieval Christians to Islam. According to John Tolan and Robert Irwin, most Christians did not consider Islam a new religion but as the variant of an old heresy; indeed, many took no interest in it.¹⁸ In this epistemological context, it is worthwhile to consider that the Griffin would have attracted the attention of Pisans not because of its “otherness” (which is highlighted today in the museum) but because of its similarities to the local culture. What were these similarities? How were they emphasized?

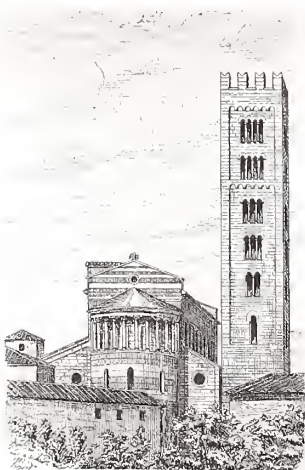
The Griffin was isolated and set apart. Then it underwent an “elevation” that transformed it from a foreign object meant to be seen and admired closely (as its incised decoration indicates) to a work viewed only from afar. Once it was perched



4

4

Griffin in white marble, Genoa, 1315. After Enrico Castelnuovo, *Niveo de marmore: l'uso artistico del marmo di Carrara dall'XI al XV secolo* (Genoa: Colombo, 1992), cat. no. 75.



5

Apse of the church of San Frediano in Lucca. Engraving, late 19th century. After Georg Gottfried Julius Dehio and Gustav von Bezold, *Die Kirchliche baukunst des abendlandes* (Stuttgart: J. G. Gotta, 1887–1901), plate 240.

on top of the Duomo, the only characteristics that could be perceived by the spectator were the fact that it was a bronze sculpture of a winged quadruped. What values were associated with these characteristics? The bronze must have recalled Rome and its antique statues, especially since Pisa had the ambition to be the new Rome.¹⁹ Many interpretations could have been associated with the Pisa Griffin, the most popular being that griffins were considered representations of Christ.²⁰ It was juxtaposed with other symbolic objects around the elliptical dome: the Madonna diametrically opposite and the Pisan crosses on both sides of the transept that give the Duomo a political aura.²¹ The Griffin was more than decorative; it also had potential symbolism.

The Griffin must be placed among a particular group of objects: the bronze statues associated with major Christian monuments, especially in two cities that were rivals of Pisa: Genoa and Lucca.²² Until the beginning of the twelfth century, the cities of Tuscany shared a political history under the rule of the marquisate, whose capital was Lucca, located at some twenty kilometers northeast of Pisa. This era ended in 1115 after the death of Matilda of Tuscany (or of Canossa) and gave way to a new era of independent city-states in northern Italy. Pisa gained power. Lucca struggled to retain her influence but suffered because it had no access to the sea. In every conflict, Lucca joined the side that opposed Pisa. During the Balearic war, Lucca, accompanied by Genoa, withdrew from the expedition in order to affirm its independence. This expedition marked the peak of Pisa's power but also the beginning of its decline and Genoa's rise.

It is within the context of these rivalries that cities erected monuments to embody their religious and political ambitions. In 1227, for example, a bronze griffin was made to adorn the Cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa. The statue was meant to symbolize the city and its willingness to offer a third option after the papacy, symbolized by the lion, and the empire, symbolized by the eagle. The Genoa griffin was lost or damaged in a fire that destroyed the cathedral in 1297, and a marble copy was made in 1315 (fig. 4).²³ Its original location in the cathedral remains unknown. That the Pisa Griffin was meant to quote or mimic the Genoa griffin, or vice versa, might be impossible to prove, but if it were a victory trophy, it may have celebrated the defeat of the Genovese rather than of the Saracens.



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6
Gilded rooster, 13th century, Lucca, 40 x 20 x 49cm, concealing an Islamic bronze falcon from the 9th or 10th century. Treasury of the Church of San Frediano, Lucca. After Clara Baracchini et al., *Lucca e l'Europa: un'idea di Medioevo, V-XI secolo* (Lucca: Fondazione Ragghianti, 2010), p. 198.



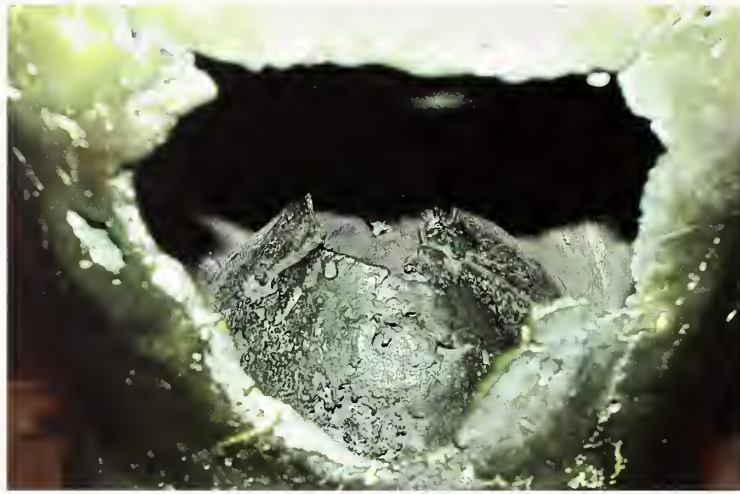
7

7
Islamic bronze falcon, 9th or 10th century (?), H: 38cm, Treasury of the Church of San Frediano, Lucca. After Baracchini et al., p. 196.

Lucca tried to reaffirm its power by rebuilding the church of San Frediano in 1112. It might have been in this same context, or a little later, that a gilded bronze rooster was set on top of the church (fig. 5). Did that happen at the same time the Pisa Griffin was placed on the Duomo? In 1960, when Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti examined the rooster closely (fig. 6)—removing the gilded copper plates, the beak and its funnel, and the crest and the tail—he discovered that it covered an Islamic bronze sculpture of a falcon (fig. 7). Thus, the object is identified within Italy as the *gallo-falco*.²⁴

Was the falcon dressed up as a rooster to conceal its Islamic provenance? Or was the goal to meet the expectations and beliefs of the sculpture's new cultural and religious environment? As discussed earlier, the second argument fits better within the cultural and political context. Not only did the Islamic falcon have to carry new values, but it also underwent a physical reshaping that can be interpreted as the concrete expression of an abstract shifting of values. The crest and the tail made the object easily recognizable as a rooster. According to Ragghianti, the beak and the funnel were added to make the rooster whistle.

Examples of bronze roosters mounted on top of churches or their bell towers are not rare in Italy. Some of them also emit sounds. In Brescia in the ninth century, Bishop Ramperto commissioned a weather vane made of a gilded plates for the monastery of San Faustino Maggiore.²⁵ There are also accounts mentioning singing bronze birds in Rome, including a bronze rooster dating from the eighth or ninth century that was placed in the bell tower of San Silvestro in Capite during the twelfth century.²⁶ The stories told about these objects are not to be taken literally. However, the repetition that occurs in the sources shows that, at a minimum, they were expected to produce sounds. One Latin poem, generally dated between the twelfth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, provides further information about the beliefs surrounding these figures.²⁷ The poem draws a comparison



8

8

Interior of the Pisa Griffin showing the vessel. Photo by Anna-Maria Carruba.

between the rooster on the church and the priest, implying that the rooster stands as the guardian of the church and more generally of the Christian community. The rooster faces the wind, and its crow is a shield against the devil:

On the church a rooster faces the wind.
He raises his head diligently
Like the priest, he knows when the devil is coming
And he then intervenes between the flock of sheep ...
The lion usually fears the crow of the rooster
And the devil flees for the same reason.²⁸

The Lucca rooster-falcon sheds light on possible uses of the Griffin and the beliefs and desires that it might have embodied. It demonstrates on the basis of physical evidence that an Islamic object could be redefined and manipulated for that purpose. It shows that a bronze birdlike sculpture located on top of a church could be connected both to the rooster and its religious and apotropaic symbolism and also be expected to produce sounds. It also helps us formulate new questions. Did the Pisans' symbolic manipulation of the Griffin affect only its extrinsic characteristics? Did it have a sound-producing mechanism? In her comprehensive article about the Pisa Griffin, Anna Contadini mentions some written sources that state that the Griffin emitted sounds when it was windy.²⁹

Contadini also discovered a bronze vessel welded to the inner surface of the rear of the sculpture, which can still be seen through a big and roughly made aperture in the belly (fig. 8). This discovery made her think that the whole sculpture was an elaborate device for producing sound. It would have contained a bagpipe, with pipes for conducting the air and transforming it into sounds and the vessel serving as the air bag. She considers this function to be the original one. For all the reasons noted earlier and when compared with the Lucca rooster-falcon, a sound-making function fits extraordinarily well within the Pisan context. Given the Griffin's position on top of the Duomo, the wind could blow straight into the hollow body and inside the vessel, which would work as sound boxes, creating two different echoing sounds. The body would emit a low-pitched sound and the vessel a high-pitched one. Concrete examples in written sources of such sound-making bronze objects

seem to be more numerous in the Latin West than in the Islamic world. In addition, there was a greater familiarity in the West with the resonant aspect of bronze, as exemplified by its use in bells and organs. Can we assume that the vessel was added by the Pisans? After all, the metallurgical evidence corroborates this hypothesis: according to Peter Northover, the zinc brass used to make the vessel is “entirely dissimilar to the gunmetal of the body.”³⁰

That the Griffin was physically manipulated in Pisa remains a very speculative scenario. However, we can still enumerate some of the characteristics with which it was likely associated. When we seek the meaning in its use, particularly in the specific context of the Duomo, and examine the political struggles of Pisa against Lucca and Genoa, it appears that the Griffin might not have been perceived as Saracen. In addition, it likely possessed numerous resonances for the Pisan viewer, including its birdlike shape, sound-making potential, political meaning (similar to the Genoa griffin), and Christian and apotropaic values (similar to the Lucca rooster-falcon). This anthropological approach could be confirmed by an epistemological one that still requires an expanded study. The display of the Griffin belongs to a period when the knowledge about Islam had not yet started to develop, that is, to a period when its Islamicity could not be known. And indeed, as shown by the written sources from the Renaissance onward, this Islamicity is a recent discovery, if not a recent construction.

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NOTES

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- 1 Sources about the Pisan campaigns against the Saracens are numerous. The inscriptions on the walls of the *Duomo* record victories in 1005 in Reggio, 1010 in Sardinia, 1034 in Bona, and 1063 in Palermo; Marco Tangheroni, ed., *Pisa e il mediterraneo* (Pisa: Skira, 2003), p. 407. The epic poem titled *Carmen in victoriam Pisanorum* gives an account of the storming of Mahdiyya and Zawila in 1087; *Carmen in Victoriam Pisanorum* (Pisa: Giardini, 1969), and the *Liber Maiolichinus* records the journey to the Balearic islands in 1113–115; Carlo Calisse, ed., *Liber Maiolichinu, de gestis Pisanorum illustribus* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmio, 1966). Although there is no documentary record of this event, the Griffin is said to have been taken to Pisa after one of these campaigns; see for example Marilyn Jenkins, "New Evidence for the Possible Provenance and Fate of the So-Called Pisa Griffin," *Islamic Archaeological Studies* 1 (1982), pp. 79–85. For a discussion of Jenkins's hypothesis of a provenance from Ifriqiya, see Anna Contadini et al., "Beasts that Roared: The Pisa Griffin and the New York Lion," in *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic studies presented to Ralph Pinder-Wilson*, ed. Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow (London: Melisende, 2002), pp. 67–68. For the display of the Griffin as war booty, see Ottavio Banti, "Pisa e l'Islam," in *Arte islamica. Presenze*

di cultura islamica nella Toscana costiera (Pisa: Museo di San Matteo, 1995), pp. 31–33; and among historians of Islamic art, see Eva R. Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian interchange from the 10th to the 12th cent.," *Art History*, 1st ser., vol. 24 (February 2001), pp. 17–50.

- 2 This was particularly the case in recent exhibitions about these relationships in Italy and Europe. See, for example, Giovanni Curatola, ed., *Eredità dell'Islam: arte islamica in Italia* (Milan: Silvana, 1993), pp. 126–31; and Gereon Sievernich et al., *Europa und der Orient 800–1900* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989), p. 592.
- 3 The question of its attribution as well as the description of its intrinsic qualities are beyond the scope of this paper. They are discussed by Contadini et al. in "Beasts that roared," pp. 65–68. As a reminder, it is a little more than one meter high and was cast with the lost-wax technique.
- 4 The capital might be the same one that now supports the cement copy. In the document dated from 1552, in the State Archives of Pisa, the Griffin is called a "hippogrif." For a reproduction and useful comments, see Giovanna Tedeschi Grisanti, "Note sul grifone del duomo di Pisa," *Bollettino storico pisano* 65 (1996), pp. 189–93.
- 5 Raffaello Roncioni, *Delle Istorie Pisane*, Parte I, Libro III, Anno 1063, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. 6, ed. Francesco Bonaini (Florence: Gio. Pietro Vieusseux, 1844), p. 114.
- 6 Paolo Tronci, *Descrizione delle Chiese, Monasteri et Oratori della Città di Pisa*, Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo, Archivio Capitolare, C152/153 (Pisa, 1643).
- 7 Giuseppe Martini, *Theatrum Basilicae Pisanae* (Rome: A. de Rubeis, 1705), p. 13.

- 8 Alessandro da Morrona, *Pisa illustrata nelle arti del disegno* (Pisa: F. Pieraccini, 1787–93), pp. 190–95.
- 9 Sebastiano Ciampi, *Osservazioni sopra l'opera del sig. Alessandro Da Morrona che ha per titolo Pisa Illustrata nelle Arti del Disegno* (Pisa: Presso Ranieri Prosperi, 1812), pp. 58–68.
- 10 For the concerns that arose in the nineteenth century about the conservation of the Pisa Griffin and its subsequent transfer to the museum, see Antonio Milone, “Grifone,” in *I Marmi di Lasinio: la collezione di sculture inedievali e moderne nel Camposanto di Pisa*, ed. Clara Baracchini (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1993), pp. 143–44.
- 11 Michelangelo Lanci, *Trattato delle simboliche rappresentanze arabiche e della varia generazione dei musulmani caratteri sopra differenti materie operati*, vol. 2 (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1845–46), pp. 54–58.
- 12 A number of iconographic and photographic documents showing these changes can be found on <http://piazza.opapisa.it> (accessed February 22, 2011).
- 13 Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64–91.
- 14 The *bacini* are the Islamic ceramic dishes that were embedded into the façades and towers of Italian churches and also used in a domestic context. See the studies of Graziella Berti, for example, *Le ceramiche medievali e post-medievali* (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 1997).
- 15 See n. 1.
- 16 We should not forget that portable objects from Islamic lands had a special prestige in the Latin West. See the often-quoted text of Theophilus Presbyter, a twelfth-century Benedictine monk, who praised the skillful artisans of Arabia, saying that it was very useful to study diligently “whatever Arabia adorns with repoussé or cast work or engravings in relief”; Theophilus Presbyter, *De diversis artibus*, trans. C. R. Dodwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 4.
- 17 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 19–50. For the original French text, see Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 32–59.
- 18 Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2006), esp. pp. 19–53; and John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). See also Richard W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
- 19 An eloquent example of literature about Pisa as *Roma altera* is Flaminio Dal Borgo, *Raccolta di scelti diplomi pisani: per appendice dell'istoria dell'origine della decadenza, e per uso delle sue dissertazioni sull'istoria della repubblica pisana* (Pisa: Giuseppe Pasque, 1765), esp. the introduction.
- 20 Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1998), p. 297. The fact that it was set on a column probably since the beginning (the column is represented in the marquetry panel in the Chorus) has not been commented on by scholars yet. It reminds us of the iconography of the rooster on the column that is part of the denial of Saint Peter. For a general study of this iconography, see S. A. Callisen, “The Iconography of the Cock on the Column,” *The Art Bulletin* 21 (June 1939), pp. 160–78.
- 21 Antonio Milone was the first to describe this disposition; see “Arabitas pisana e medioevo mediterraneo: relazioni artistiche tra XI e XIII secolo,” in *Fibonacci tra arte e scienza*, ed. Luigi Radicati di Bronzolo (Milan: Silvana, 2003), pp. 101–31.
- 22 A good introduction to these rivalries is Yves Renouard, *Les Villes d'Italie de la fin du Xe siècle au début du XVe siècle* (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1969).
- 23 Enrico Castelnuovo, *Niveo de marmore: l'uso artistico del marmo di Carrara dall'XI al XV secolo* (Genova: Colombo, 1992), cat. no. 75.
- 24 The bronze falcon, certainly of an Islamic origin, has been dated to the ninth or tenth century but still needs further analysis. For a bibliography and a recent study of this object, see Clara Baracchini et al., *Lucca e l'Europa: un'idea di Medioevo, V–XI secolo* (Lucca: Fondazione Ragghianti, 2010), pp. 196–200.
- 25 Simona Gavinelli, “Il gallo di Ramperto: potere, simboli e scrittura a Brescia nel secolo IX,” in *Margarita amicorum: studi di cultura europea per Agostino Sottili*, ed. Fabio Forner et al. (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2005), pp. 401–27.
- 26 Carlo Bertelli and Gian Pietro Brogiolo, ed., *Il Futuro dei Longobardi: l'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europa di Carlo Magno* (Milan: Skira, 2000), p. 329.
- 27 It is sometimes known under the title *Comparatio Galli Cum Presbiteri*. It is conserved in a manuscript of the treasury of the Cathedral of Oehringen, no. 3, f. 143v; published in Édéstand du Mériel, *Poésies populaires latines du Moyen Age* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1847), pp. 12–16. The translation is mine.
- 28 *Supra ecclesiam positus gallus contra ventum
Caput diligentius erigit extantum
Sic sacerdos ubi scit daemonis adventum*

Illuc se obiciat pro grege bidentum ...
Solet leo tremere de galli canore
et fugit diabolus solito de more

- 29 Contadini et al., “Beasts that roared,”
p. 69. Unfortunately she doesn’t give a
precise reference. The known sources
that mention the sound aspect of the
griffin date from the nineteenth century.
See, for example, Jean-Joseph Marcel,
“Notice sur un monument arabe
conservé à Pise,” *Journal asiatique*, 3rd
ser., vol. 7 (1839), pp. 81–88.
- 30 Contadini et al., “Beasts that roared,”
p. 70.

TEXT AND PAINTINGS IN THE AL-WĀSIṬĪ MAQĀMĀT

Abstract

The copy of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, arabe 5847, was made by Yaḥyā b. Maḥmūd b. Yaḥyā b. Abī'l-ḥasan b. Kūrriḥā al-Wāsiṭī, who tell us in its colophon that he was responsible for both the calligraphy and the illustrations, and gives us the date, AH 6 Ramadan 634/May 3, 1236 CE. This is a well-known manuscript, having been recognized as one of the masterpieces of Arab painting and Islamic art for more than a century.

The al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt* features three unprecedented pictorial features: first, at least sixteen double-page paintings, each of which represents a single episode in the text; second, one full-page painting with no text; and third, two paintings spread across two open pages with no text. This paper analyzes al-Wāsiṭī's use of text and image and shows that, based on previously unnoticed lacunae, the original manuscript could have had up to ten more paintings in addition to its current number of ninety-nine.

THE COPY OF AL-ḤARĪRĪ'S *MAQĀMĀT* in the Paris Bibliothèque nationale, arabe 5847, is frequently known as the Schefer *Maqāmāt* for the collection from which it was acquired. It seems more appropriate to name it the al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt*, after Yaḥyā b. Maḥmūd b. Yaḥyā b. Abī'l-ḥasan b. Kūrriḥā al-Wāsiṭī, who tell us in its colophon that he was responsible for both the calligraphy and the illustrations, and gives us the date, AH 6 Ramadan 634/May 3, 1236 CE. For more than a century, this well-known manuscript has been recognized as one of the masterpieces of Arab painting and Islamic art.

What is startling about the al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt* is its unprecedented employment of three pictorial features: first, the use of at least sixteen double-page paintings in which a single episode is represented with a few lines of text above and below (usually the same on each page); second, one full-page painting with no text; and third, two paintings spread across two open pages with no text.¹ This paper analyzes these features and others relating to al-Wāsiṭī's use of text and image and shows that the original manuscript could have had up to ten more paintings in addition to the extant ninety-nine.

Prior to the publication of the facsimile, the vast majority of scholars would have been familiar with manuscript only from reproductions in books and articles.² Grabar's illustrations,³ and their reproductions in the other most widely consulted work on the subject, Richard Ettinghausen's *Arab Painting*,⁴ usually show only the part of the page that contains the image, leaving the reader to guess how much of the whole page was covered by text and how much by painting. On occasion, a two-page spread was reproduced in other publications,⁵ but again, we were left wonder-



1

1
Al-Hārith and the crowd, *maqāmā* 2 (f. 6b) and Abu Zayd's arrival, *maqāmā* 3 (f. 7a). All the illustrations in this essay are from al-Hārī, *Maqāmāt*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, arabe 5847; after facsimile, *Maqāmāt al-Hārīriyya*.

ing how much text might have been omitted. Only in recent times has it become usual to publish full pages in reproductions of Islamic book illustrations.⁶

Where and for whom was the manuscript made? Grabar noted simply that its place of production was unknown.⁷ In the preface to the facsimile, he stated that Baghdad was the most obvious choice, although he added, "Nothing in its images provides a clue."⁸ This is being unduly coy, however, as the painting of a mosque on folio 164b includes an inscription in the name of al-Mustansir, the Abbasid caliph (reigned 1226–42) at the time the manuscript was calligraphed in 1237.⁹ It is inconceivable that the manuscript could have been painted anywhere but in this caliph's dominions, and the largest urban center likely to have supported a market in expensive illustrated books was Baghdad.¹⁰ This also raises the question of the potential client for the manuscript, and in particular, its double-page frontispiece, which was the subject of an intensive analysis by Robert Hillenbrand.¹¹ He plausibly concluded that the right-hand frontispiece was a portrait of a secular ruler, and the left-hand one an author portrait. But there are further implications of this to be considered. Since the clothing of the figure on the right is that of a Turkish official and the manuscript was almost certainly produced in Baghdad, either the Abbasid caliph was wearing then-fashionable Turkish garb (a most unlikely scenario), or al-Wāsiṭī never pinned his hopes on a caliphal sale.

It seems from the colophon that al-Wāsiṭī did not have a patron when he made the book, so he evidently thought that an Arabic-speaking Turkish patron was the most likely buyer. In theory, this could have been an emir at the Abbasid court or

one of the atabegs who governed several of the neighboring principalities. The most obvious figure is Badr al-Din Lu'lu', who ruled over Mosul with the approval of the Abbasid caliph from 1234 to 1239, and whose keen interest in book painting was shown by his appearance in Turkish dress in the frontispieces of the *Kitāb al-aghānī* dated 1217–19. He had ruled over Mosul as the vizier of the last Zangids from 1210–11.¹² He was illiterate,¹³ and so a highly illustrated copy of the *Maqāmāt* would have been of much greater interest to him than one without paintings.

The possibility that there were up to ten missing paintings derives from the many previously unnoticed lacunae in the text.¹⁴ One complete unillustrated manuscript page has fifteen lines, equivalent to around nineteen lines of Steingass's printed edition of the text¹⁵ (to which the written text in the manuscript conforms closely). Between folios 2 and 3, seventy-four lines of printed text are missing; because $74 \div 19 = 3.9$, one might have assumed that four text pages were missing. However, since there is a definite imprint of paint from a missing illustration on folio 3a—equivalent to at least ten lines, or two thirds of the written text space—then it is likely that six pages and as many as three illustrations are missing.¹⁶ There is another gap of twenty printed lines between folios 29 and 30. This indicates that one unillustrated page is missing, but since the number of missing pages must be even, then two half-page paintings are probably missing. A third gap is between folios 79 and 80; it encompasses twenty-three printed lines, just over one page of manuscript text, indicating that either a nearly full-page painting or, more likely, two smaller ones are missing. The fourth is a gap of twenty-six lines between folios 96b and 97a, equivalent to a page and a half of written text, so another half-page painting must be missing here. A gap between folios 133 and 134 is of twenty lines of printed text, just over one manuscript page; so one full-page painting or, again more likely, two half-page paintings are missing. One was probably on the page facing 133b, since one figure in the group is turned away from the speaker and toward the opposite page. The final gap between folios 156 and 157 is harder to interpret; folio 156 ends eight lines before the end of the *maqāmā*, but folio 157 has seven lines of *tafsīr* (commentary) before the start of the next *maqāmā*. It was common for al-Wāsiṭī to place a painting at the end of a *maqāmā*,¹⁷ but given the uncertain length of the *tafsīr*—several of considerable length (but never illustrated) are included elsewhere¹⁸—it is unclear how much is missing.¹⁹ It is evident, however, that although there are currently ninety-nine paintings in the manuscript, there may have been as many as 109 originally.

The information in the colophon that al-Wāsiṭī was both calligrapher and painter is significant. All of the paintings seem to be by the same hand so, despite the very considerable labor involved, there is no reason to doubt al-Wāsiṭī's claim. This means that he would have been the one to plan out the number and spacing



2

2

Al-Ḥārith approaches Abu Zayd and his son, *maqāmā* 4, ff. 9b–10a.

of the paintings. In addition, unlike painters whose mistakes can be related to an imperfect understanding of the text or even, if they were illiterate, a poor memory of the story that was narrated to them, we can expect al-Wāsiṭī's choices at all stages to have been deliberate ones.

Given that at least fourteen pages and up to a tenth of the paintings are missing, we do not have complete information on the original manuscript layout, so the following is based on what remains. How did al-Wāsiṭī signal to the viewer that two paintings on a double page were to be read as one scene? It seems most likely that he wished this to be an automatic response. Perhaps we can take the single clear exception first, the two paintings executed on folios 6b–7a (fig. 1). There could be no possibility of confusion here, as the caption that announces the beginning of *maqāmā* 3 is clearly visible, in large gold letters, just three lines below the painting on folio 6b. The painting on folio 6b obviously belongs to *maqāmā* 2, and that on 7a to *maqāmā* 3. In fact, the remainder of the sixteen occasions in which double-page paintings were originally present with text should be interpreted as one scene split over the two pages, rather than as two illustrations of two separate incidences within the text. In thirteen of these,²⁰ the exact same number of lines of text appear above and below the painting on each side, a clear visual clue for simultaneity. The remaining three²¹ are almost identical; we will examine the reasons for their different treatment.

In *maqāmā* 4, folios 9b–10a (fig. 2), after a caravan comes to rest, al-Ḥārith overhears a man and his son discussing the proper way to treat others. “Before the camels had risen,” he searched for the speakers, finding Abu Zayd and his son. The paintings show the caravan asleep on the right, and al-Ḥārith encountering Abu Zayd and his son on the left. The break line²² of the painting on the left is at the point where father and son are still talking; had al-Wāsiṭī wanted this painting to be interpreted as a separate scene he would more likely have placed it on the following page, beside the text that specified the meeting.²³

Folios 18b–19a (fig. 3) are from *maqāmā* 7,²⁴ when al-Ḥārith visits a mosque to celebrate the feast at the end of Ramadan. There, an old woman leads a man whose



3



4

3
The celebration of Eid al-Fitr,
maqāmā 7, ff. 18b–19a.

4
Abu Zayd and his son before
pilgrims, *maqāmā* 14, ff. 37b–38a.

eyes are closed (he turns out to be Abu Zayd faking blindness). Surprisingly, in the painting his eyes are open, a strange lapse on the part of al-Wāsiṭī,²⁵ although he is shown convincingly leaning on the shoulder of the woman for guidance. The *ṭabl-khāna* orchestra, not mentioned in the text but appropriate for the occasion of the feast, takes up the left-hand page.²⁶

Folios 37b–38a (fig. 4) have an unequal number of lines above and below the painting on each side: 37b has three above and two below, 38a has two above and one below. Yet a glance is sufficient to confirm that they illustrate one scene. The story is from *maqāmā* 14, a straightforward one in which Abu Zayd and his son appear before pilgrims at Mecca and are granted the camel and food they ask for. The space allotted to the painting is virtually the same on each side; the horizontal registers match exactly. On each page, the interactive glances of the figures toward



5



6

5
Abu Zayd recovers his bag, *maqāmā*
16, ff. 43b–44a.

6
Abu Zayd flees from a glass vase,
maqāmā 18, ff. 47b–48a.

their counterparts on the other side reinforce the monoscenic aspect of the scene. The left-hand page corresponds to the end of the *maqāmā*, and so al-Wāsiṭī could afford to be more generous with the spacing: the larger script below the painting is the caption for the following *maqāmā* that begins on folio 38b. The finial at the top of the tent of folio 38a compensates for the use of one line less above the painting than on the page opposite.

In *maqāmā* 16, al-Wāsiṭī exploited the full dramatic possibilities of the double-page scheme (folios 43b–44a, fig. 5). Abu Zayd, after composing palindromes for a group in a mosque, promises to return to the company after he has delivered their gifts of food to his children. However, the boy sent with him relates that when Abu Zayd reached his home he took his bag and refused to return. The scene on the left shows him wrestling with the boy for possession of the bag, and the one on the



7

7
Abu Zayd rides away from the crowd,
maqāmā 18, ff. 50b–51a.

right depicts people gesturing in surprise. The passage related to the taking of the bag is on the next page (folio 44b), but neither this nor the fact that the group in the mosque couldn't observe this scene mattered to al-Wāsiṭī. He decided that the most dramatic rendering of the *maqāmā* meant that both events had to be viewed simultaneously.

Folios 47b–48a (fig. 6) each have the same architectural framework, which serves to unify the scene. There has been some confusion regarding the scene's interpretation. The story (*maqāmā* 18) revolves around a feast at which Abu Zayd shies away from a glass vase, but is persuaded to stay once the vase is removed. Grabar suggested that the scene on the right represented the glass vase as well as Abu Zayd jumping up to complain about it, and possibly that the left page showed the dish being sent away and Abu Zayd being asked to return.²⁷ The difficulty with this, as Grabar remarked, is that a sequential approach is not typical of al-Wāsiṭī.²⁸ In fact, it would not just be atypical, it would be unprecedented. And although it is not unknown for al-Wāsiṭī to represent his protagonist with a black beard (as seen in folio 47b), he is much more often depicted with a white one, as on the left page. The story calls for the offending dish to be filled with sweetmeats (*na'im*), but the dish on folio 47b contains fowl such as chickens or quails. More likely we have a general depiction of the feast on folio 47b, with two servants distributing the food in the background, while on folio 48a Abu Zayd recoils from the green vase. To illustrate the text there was no need for the painting on folio 47b; al-Wāsiṭī included it simply to further our entertainment.

Later in *maqāmā* 18, Abu Zayd rides away from the crowd, having been given presents of silver dishes that were substituted for glass ones (folios 50b–51a, fig. 7). Al-Wāsiṭī's problem was how to accommodate human figures on one side with the much taller image of a figure on a camel on the other. Altering the number of lines above the painting on each side was the answer, a solution that could be accommodated easily as this was the very end of the story.

Folios 74b–75a (fig. 8) from *maqāmā* 25 present a different problem. The illustration is supposed to show Abu Zayd, dressed in nothing but a turban and a loin-



8

8
Abu Zayd begs for clothing, *maqāmā*
25, ff. 74b–75a.

cloth, addressing a crowd. Instead, the crowd, to the left and right, looks toward a tower whose interior is black, the presumed location of Abu Zayd.²⁹ It was hardly prudery that prevented al-Wāsiṭī from depicting the nearly naked man; in *maqāmā* 20 he is shown displaying his genitals.³⁰ The two figures on the right of the tower obviously have been mostly repainted, and a visible line of damage extends into the side of the tower. The person responsible for repainting, presumably not understanding the iconography of the scene, evidently decided that it was simpler to blacken out the entire interior than to repaint Abu Zayd.

The third example in which a double-page painting has lines above and below it that differ on each side occurs in *maqāmā* 32 (folios 100b–101a, fig. 9). The left-hand scene is the familiar one³¹ of a woman (actually a singing girl who has been presented to Abu Zayd) with a herd of camels; the right-hand one shows Abu Zayd pointing out his presents to his friend al-Ḥārith. It almost seems as if al-Wāsiṭī miscalculated here. With one text line missing, there is a slightly bigger space on the left than on the right, which is not surprising, as one would expect the camel herd to take up more space than the figures. But in the paintings the opposite has happened. Al-Wāsiṭī extends the tree between the figures on the right to fill up the gap that would have otherwise have resulted between the text above. There is an even bigger gap on the opposite side. Al-Wāsiṭī probably originally envisioned drawing fewer camels, which would have enabled him to make them taller. But his memorable composition of ten animals, rhythmically arranged on a single horizon, must have been more satisfying to him, even if it meant he had to leave a gap by proportionally reducing the camels' height.

In *maqāmā* 39 (folios 120b–121a, fig. 10) al-Ḥārith and Abu Zayd, on board a ship, take refuge on an island and explore it to find provisions, eventually arriving at the ruler's palace. Ostensibly, here the order is reversed (reading right to left), as the boat should have docked on the island (which is depicted on the left) before the encounter at the palace took place (which is on the right). But al-Wāsiṭī is not interested in a sequential interpretation. When the figures arrive at the palace the boat is simultaneously visible (on the left of the page) at the place where it had previously



9



10

9
Abu Zayd points out his presents to
al-Hārith, *maqāmā* 32, ff. 100b–101a.

10
Al-Hārith and Abu Zayd arrive
at the ruler's palace, *maqāmā* 39,
ff. 120b–121a.

docked, providing an appropriate complement to the architectural scene. Al-Wāsiṭī also shows his independence from the text by adding creatures that inhabit the island—monkeys, birds, a sphinx, and a harpy—none of which is mentioned in the original text.³²

This independence is shown in many other ways,³³ most importantly by the two double-page paintings (folios 155b–156a, fig. 11) and the single-page painting, all without text. The latter was justly celebrated by Ettinghausen³⁴ for its portrayal of village life—a tableau, it may be emphasized, that is not occasioned by any detail in the text.

Where did al-Wāsiṭī get the idea for the double-page paintings? This was investigated in depth by David James, who pointed to an earlier example of what he calls “lateral expansion,” where text surrounds the paintings on both sides: the



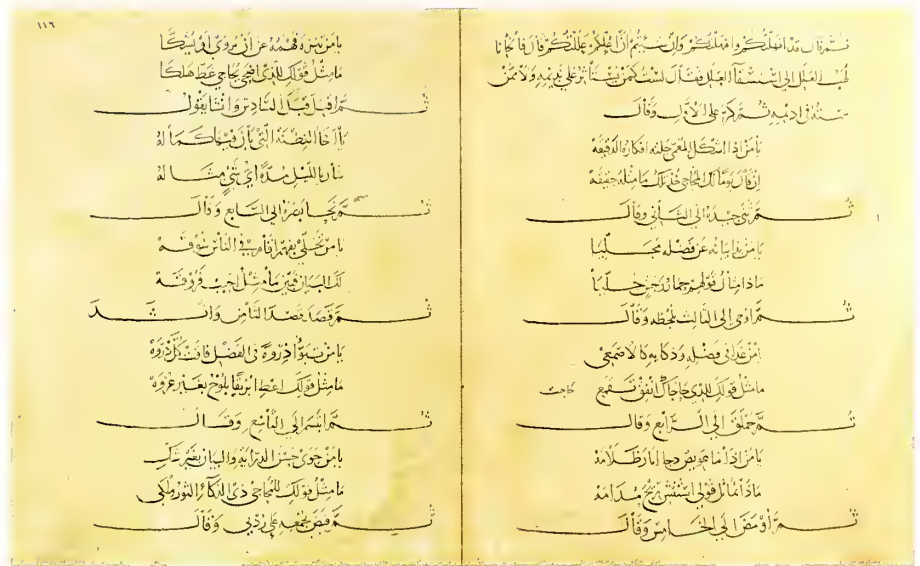
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11

Abu Zayd addresses the crowd,
maqāmā 47, ff. 155b–156a.

Kitāb al-Baytara, dated to AH 606/1210 CE.³⁵ James also speculated that two other *Maqāmāt* manuscripts with examples of “lateral expansion,” although dated later than the al-Wāsiṭī example, could reflect earlier models.³⁶ Whether or not they do, we are not concerned with crediting al-Wāsiṭī with the invention of the double-page painting surrounded by text. What he did was to employ it systematically in a totally unprecedented manner, in at least sixteen instances. In addition, the single-page painting without text and the two double-page paintings without text are also unprecedented for their time. It is surprising that this had no effect on the subsequent development of Arab painting; al-Wāsiṭī’s innovations evidently were too radical for their time. Persian painting developed on independent lines, with a gradual expansion of the picture into and beyond the text space in the fourteenth century; only at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in works produced under the patronage of Iskandar Sultan in Shiraz, did double full-page paintings appear.

Al-Wāsiṭī’s paintings demonstrate varied and complex responses to the text; but what inspired him and others to illustrate it in the first place? This vexed question was recently revisited by David Roxburgh,³⁷ who noted that Rice, Ettinghausen, James, and Grabar all commented on the text’s meager illustrative potential. Roxburgh counters by suggesting that the visuality of the written text, such as al-Ḥariri’s palindromic sentences and sentences written entirely without diacritical marks, “was a sufficiently adequate visual manifestation to obviate pictorial attempts at literal translation of al-Ḥariri’s ingenious and arcane literary meanings.”³⁸ It is certainly true that al-Wāsiṭī, the calligrapher, was alive to the visual possibilities of



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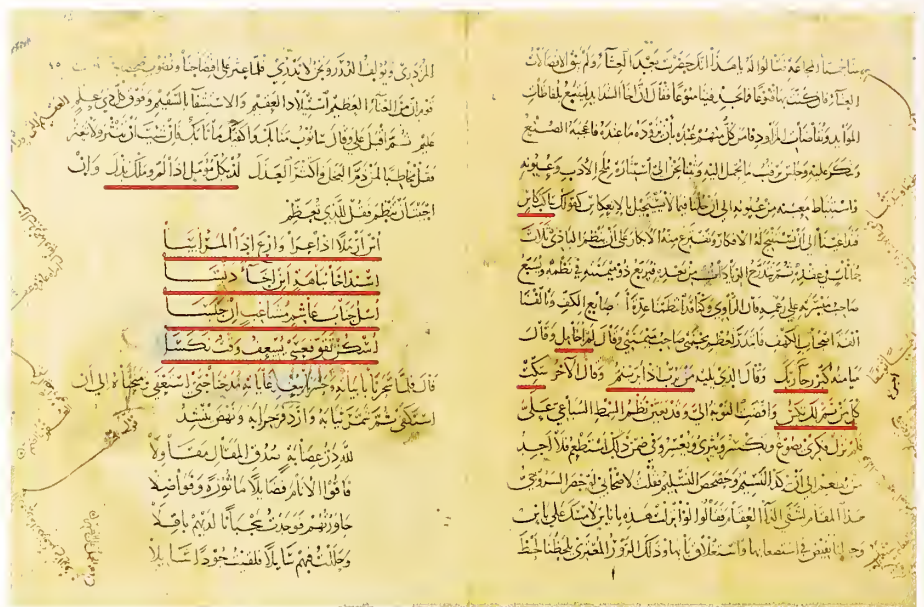
12

Maqāmā 36, ff. 111b–112a.

patterning the poems that are sprinkled among the prose (folios 111b–112a, fig. 12), and his sensitivity to the visuality of the text is emphasized by the extraordinary zigzag patterning in red ink in the margins that he frequently employed for the commentary (figs. 5, 6). But his response to palindromes, as in figure 13, for instance, was to treat them as normal prose where they occurred (even to the extent of breaking one short palindrome at the end of one line and continuing it on the next). Had any such visual patterning of the text been paramount, one would have thought it unlikely for the text to have been provided with paintings, and even less likely that al-Wāsiṭī's *Maqāmāt* would become the most popular illustrated medieval Arabic text. Roxburgh claims that what he refers to as the red herring of the word/image conundrum has persisted through the modern critical reception of the text: "Though early literary historians favoured its verbal acrobatics and learned language, recent approaches to the fifty *maqamas* have restored the importance of narrative and also suggested a thematic coherence across the assemblies."³⁹

In his preface, al-Ḥariri himself tells us that he purposefully structured the assemblies as if they were from the tongue of Abu Zayd, as related by al-Ḥarith, and that "whenever I change the pasture⁴⁰ I have no purpose but to inspirit the reader, and to increase the number of those who shall seek my book."⁴¹ He was obviously well aware of the value of this narrative artifice; later on in the preface he wishes that the intelligent "will rank these Assemblies in the order of useful writings, and class them with the fables that relate to brutes and lifeless objects."⁴² This is a clear reference to *Kalila and Dimna*, another very popular illustrated early Arabic storybook.⁴³

But we really don't need the musings of literary theorists to tell us why this text or any other was illustrated so often. Al-Ḥariri's opinion is one matter, but more important for our purposes is the view of those responsible for deciding which manuscripts would be illustrated. Given the lack of court-sponsored ateliers in the Arab world, we have to ask whether commercial ateliers, or calligraphers and painters like al-Wāsiṭī, sat around pondering which contemporary texts had the narrative qualities best suited to advertise their pictorial storytelling skills.⁴⁴ Obviously a certain minimum narrativity is necessary; there are no illustrated gram-



13

13

Maqāmā 16, , ff. 42b–43a.
Underlining in red added
to palindromes.

mar books. But historical texts, such as al-Ṭabarī for instance, are full of discrete incidents that could easily have been illustrated.⁴⁵ So what made ateliers or artists pick the *Maqāmāt* so frequently? The simple answer is that it was the best seller of its age, with more than seven hundred copies of the text authorized by al-Ḥariri during his lifetime.⁴⁶ A calligrapher, taking the risk of copying a work on his own initiative, knew that he was more likely to make a sale of this manuscript. A skilled painter, on his own or in a workshop, was aware of what his skills contributed to a manuscript, adding value that would be more than compensated for in the profit from the increased selling price. Not only was the chance of a sale of an illustrated manuscript greatly increased by the demand for the text, it was the demand in the first place that determined the likelihood of its being illustrated.

To summarize, al-Wāsiṭī's place in art history and his pictorial skills have been justly celebrated. His paintings, often contained within striking compositions, combine mastery of observation—from the squirming unease of the judge in the presence of the bee-stung lips and plump cheeks of his would-be adolescent conquest (folio 26a)⁴⁷ to the wrinkled necks of camels (fig. 9)—and details of daily life that have been mined for contemporary social history.⁴⁸ But his status as a pioneer in the *mise-en-page* of text and image should be equally feted, as he was the first to incorporate a single-page painting devoid of text within a manuscript and to make extensive use of double-page paintings, with and without text. That these innovations were evidently too radical for his time, only becoming common much later in Persian painting, does not make his achievement any less exciting.

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NOTES

- 1 Frontispieces with these characteristics are common, but not paintings within manuscripts. A considerable part of what I discuss in this paper is not new, or at least is not new to some specialists of Arab painting, but it can be argued that it has not had the emphasis that it deserves. David James, "Space-Forms in the Work of the Baghdād 'Maqāmāt' Illustrators, 1225–58," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37 (1974), pp. 305–20, commented on many features on which I will elaborate, but his article has been strangely neglected. It was omitted from the bibliography of Oleg Grabar's magnum opus, *The Illustrations of the Maqamat* (Chicago and London, 1984), although it is referred to in the text; it does feature in the much shorter bibliography attached to Grabar's introduction to the facsimile of the al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt* published in 2003: *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīriyya*, 2 vols., introduction by Oleg Grabar (London, 2003). I am grateful to Jere Bacharach for his comments on an earlier version of my paper.
- 2 Few have turned the pages of the original; if my experience is anything to go by, it was normally suggested that even scholars familiar to the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque nationale should make do with a color microfilm of the manuscript, an acute barrier to appreciation of the simultaneity of its double-page paintings.
- 3 In *The Illustrations of the Maqamat*, he published all of its paintings, albeit in the difficult-to-use microfilm format.
- 4 Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (New York, 1977).
- 5 For example, Gaston Migeon, *Manuel d'art musulman*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1927), p. 125, fig. 11.
- 6 See, for example, the double-page spread, reproducing the complete two pages, of ff. 18b–19a of the al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt* in *L'Art du livre arabe: du manuscrit au livre d'artiste*, exh. cat., Bibliothèque nationale de France, ed. Marie-Geneviève Guesdon and Annie Vernay-Nouri (Paris, 2001), pp. 134–35.
- 7 Grabar, *Illustrations*, p. 10: "... it is safer at this stage simply to assume that we do not know where Paris 5847 was made."
- 8 *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīriyya*, p. 17.
- 9 This was first noted by Bishr Farès, as Grabar pointed out in *Illustrations*, p. 169, n. 12.
- 10 The only other option would be Mosul, but in this *Maqāmāt* the absence of the red background characteristic of Mosul painting is just one of the stylistic reasons for preferring Baghdad.
- 11 "The Schefer Ḥarīrī: A Study in Islamic Frontispiece Design," in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Leiden and Boston, 2007), pp. 117–34.
- 12 E. Honigsmann and C. E. Bosworth, "al-Mawṣil," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, accessed September 10, 2011, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/>.
- 13 Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, Ibn al-Ṭīṭṭaqā, trans. C. E. J. Whitting as *Al Fakhrī on the Systems of Government and the Moslem Dynasties, Composed by Muhammad Son of 'Alī Son of Tabataba, Known as the Rapid Talker, May God Have Mercy on Him* (London, 1947), p. 15. I owe this reference to the kindness of Teresa Fitzherbert.
- 14 One must also note that an apparent open page with two paintings on ff. 117b–118a is misleading, as f. 117 is bound out of order; it should follow what is now f. 118. Similarly, f. 125 (with one painting) belongs before the unillustrated f. 124.
- 15 F. Steingass, *The Assemblies of Harīrī: Student's Edition of the Arabic Text with English Notes, Grammatical, Critical and Historical* (London, 1897).

- 16 Before it entered the Bibliothèque nationale, Arabic numerals in heavy black ink denoted the foliation; but they must be relatively late, since they also note lacunae. The Arabic f. 1 starts on the BN f. 2; on the Arabic f. 2 is written: 2, 3, 4, 5, and on the next page f. 6, indicating that whoever foliated it had also determined that three folios are missing. The Arabic foliation similarly writes the missing folios in addition to the current one at the parts where folios are missing, except in the case of the gap between ff. 133–34; in the Arabic, f. 137 is followed by f. 139. This tells us that it lost a further page after the Arabic foliation took place, but unfortunately there is no evidence as to when this might have been.
- 17 *Maqāmās* 2, 4, 5, 14, 17, 20, 25, 26, 28, 29, 42, and 49.
- 18 That is, ff. 54a–55b, 70b–74b, 81a–84b, 113a–114b, 126b–130a, 143b–145b.
- 19 The person responsible for the Arabic foliation, referred to above, wrote 161, 162 at the top of the BN f. 157a, indicating that he thought only one page was missing.
- 20 Folios 9b–10a, 18b–19a, 30b–31a, 43b–44a, 47b–48a, 52b–53a, 55b–56a, 63b–64a, 74b–75a, 91b–92a, 94b–95a, 120b–121a, 139b–140a.
- 21 Folios 37b–38a, 50b–51a, 100b–101a.
- 22 The concept of the break line—which comes immediately before a painting in a manuscript and in Persian manuscripts usually corresponds very closely to the subject of the painting—is discussed in Farhad Mehran, “The Break-line Verse: The Link between Text and Image in the ‘First Small’ *Shahnama*,” *Shahnama Studies* 1, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge 2006), pp. 151–70.
- 23 The painting takes up about nine lines of text; even if the painting on f. 10a had been replaced by text, the point in the text that mentions the meeting of al-Hārith and Abu Zayd would still have been on f. 10b.
- 24 The left-hand side at least is well known, having been published separately by Ettinghausen in *Arab Painting*, p. 118.
- 25 As noted by Grabar, *Illustrations*, p. 37.
- 26 James, “Space-Forms,” p. 309.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Grabar, *Illustrations*, p. 71, claims that Abu Zayd is shown in the tower, but omits to mention that he is invisible in this instance.
- 30 Folio 57a.
- 31 Reproduced in Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 117.
- 32 Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 123, also noted that the scene is largely the creation of the painter’s imagination.
- 33 D. S. Rice pointed out how al-Wāsiṭī’s painting of the entombment in *maqāmā* 11 should come at the beginning of the story, but appears at the end of Abu Zayd’s recital, much later in the text: “The Oldest Illustrated Arabic Manuscript?,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22 (1959), p. 217. James, “Space-Forms,” p. 314, notes several similar examples where al-Wāsiṭī placed the painting independently of the associated text.
- 34 *Arab Painting*, pp. 115–17.
- 35 “Space-Forms,” p. 309.
- 36 These are the British Library, London, ms Or. 1200, and the John Rylands Library, Manchester, ms Ar. 680. The former is dated AH 654/1256 CE; despite the poor quality of its paintings, it has been recognized as copying an earlier tradition (Grabar, *Illustrations*, pp. 12–13). James notes (“Space-forms,” p. 311, n. 15) that on paleographic grounds the Rylands copy has been assigned to the early thirteenth century; it contains two dates, both notes added to the text; one AH 1044/1634–35 CE, the other Rabi’ I 26, for which AH 626/1228 CE has been suggested. The original illustrations have been repainted. Grabar, *Illustrations*, p. 16, considers that the thirteenth-century date must also be a later addition and that some of its paintings copied a work like the al-Wāsiṭī *Maqāmāt*.
- 37 David Roxburgh, “Books of Stars, Mechanical Devices, and Maqamat and Animal Fables: Image and Genre in Medieval Arabic Manuscripts,” *Hadeeth ad-Dar* 30 (2009), pp. 2–7. This is a transcription of a talk given in Kuwait by the author, who did not have the chance to proofread it before its publication. It may therefore not quite accurately represent his views, but rather than be accused of ignoring it, I thought it preferable to respond to some of its provocative ideas.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 40 In other words, specify a different setting.
- 41 Thomas Chenery, *The Assemblies of al-Ḥariri, Translated from the Arabic, with an Introduction and Notes, Historical and Grammatical* (London and Edinburgh, 1867), p. 106.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- 43 Bernard O’Kane, *Early Persian Painting: Kalila and Dimna Manuscripts of the Late Fourteenth Century* (London, 2003), pp. 27–32.
- 44 In planning the illustrations, al-Wāsiṭī obviously would have thought about which stories offered the most interesting narrative possibilities, tempered by a wish to have paintings spread more or less evenly throughout the text; there is unfortunately not space here to explore this further, and the missing pages and paintings make it somewhat speculative.
- 45 See Raya Shani, “A Pictorial Representation of the *Ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* in an Ilkhanid Copy of Bal’ami’s *Tarjuma-yi tarikh-i Tabari* in the Freer Gallery,” in

The Iconography of Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand, ed. Bernard O’Kane (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 285–308. However, the tradition of illustrating historical texts never emerged in the Arab world, despite its popularity in the Iranian (and later Mughal and Turkish) world from the early fourteenth century onward.

- 46 In Iranian painting, the *Khamṣa* of Nizāmī—with a much less action-packed text than the *Shahnama* (think of the repetitions of Bahrām Gūr in different colored pavilions in many manuscripts)—was almost as frequently illustrated, simply because of the quality and popularity of its poetry.
- 47 Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, p. 114.
- 48 Shirley Guthrie, *Arab Social Life in the Middle Ages: An Illustrated Study* (London, 1995).

و ششماه زمستان و اگر آفتاب مسامت راس شدی ششماه بهار
 و حیوان بکلی تلف شدی از غایت حرارت و چمن اگر از بهمت
 راس ششماه دور شدی از غایت برودت هلاک شدی و بخت فلک
 آفتاب و آن مسافت پائین سطح اعلی و سطح اسفل باشد بصدور
 و پنجاه و پنج فرس و مقنا و میلست و این صورت فلک است



فصل فی خاصیت الشمس بدان آفتاب را نیز اعظم خوانند
 و منجمان گویند که او ملک کوکبت و قمر وزیر و عطارد کاتب
 او و قمر صاحب چشم و مشنری قاضی و زحل خنجر و اذو بر
 حینا که و خد متکا را فلک اقبالیم و بروج شد و درجات و بهیما
 و دقایق محاسنها و ثوابت منزلها و این تشبیه خوبست و از عجایب

BETWEEN ASTROLOGY AND ANATOMY

*Updating Qazwīnī's 'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Iran***Abstract**

Zakariyā' b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, written by Murshid *al-kātib* al-Shīrāzī and dated AH 952/1545 CE (now in the Chester Beatty Library as Ms Per. 212), attracted attention early on because of the quality of its calligraphy and its rich illustration and illumination. The effort invested in its artistic value was part of a broader attempt to create a copy that could fulfill its function as a compendium of natural history better than previous Shiraz manuscripts had done. Information lost in the streamlining process of commercial production at the end of the fifteenth century was regained and additional knowledge provided. The reworking adds another facet to the treatment of such unstable texts as Qazwīnī's compendium. Its ambiguous character exhibits some parallels with developments that can be observed in the compilation of knowledge on nature in sixteenth-century Europe.

MANUSCRIPT PER. 212 IN THE CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY in Dublin, which contains Zakariyā' b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* in the second Persian adaptation,¹ has been known to scholars since its presentation at the famous Burlington House Exhibition of Persian Art in 1931.² The subsequent catalogue by Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray included a short description of the manuscript, reproduced eight of its illustrations,³ and commented, "This manuscript ... would be hard to parallel for variety, sustained fertility of invention, and the delightful ease and humour of the animal-drawing."⁴ In the chapter on sixteenth-century provincial schools in his book on *Persian Painting*, Basil Gray later singled it out as one of only two manuscripts to represent Shiraz painting.⁵ About the same time, the second volume of the catalogue of the Persian manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library was published, providing a thorough description of the manuscript accompanied by seventeen of its illustrations.⁶ This created a solid base for further research. Basil Robinson took care to incorporate it into the 1967 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁷ Then, with the taxonomic work largely completed, interest in the manuscript withered away.

A thorough analysis of the manuscript presents some intriguing questions. What was the place of compendia of natural history within manuscript production in early Safavid Iran? What were desirable updates of its content in the eyes of a mid-sixteenth-century reader? How, in practice, did Shiraz workshops approach the task of delivering an authentic and updated book on natural history? And more general, what does the manuscript tell us about the treatment of unstable texts?⁸

The Chester Beatty manuscript dated AH 952/1545 CE is the only copy of Qazwīnī's *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* signed in the colophon by Murshid *al-kātib*

¹
Orbit of the sun, fol. 26b.

All works are Zakariyā' b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, 1545. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms Per. 212. ©The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.



2

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Figure of planet Mars, fol. 34a.

al-Shīrāzī, called 'Aṭṭār.⁹ Whatever one may assume about how many people are hidden behind this label, the fact remains that among the about sixty-five manuscripts¹⁰ connected to the name, only this one contains Qazwīnī's work. Furthermore, Per. 212 is one of not more than four illustrated *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* manuscripts extant from the first half of the sixteenth century.¹¹ This stands in sharp contrast to the Turkman manuscripts of the late fifteenth century, which number at least eleven copies.¹² Although the output of illustrated manuscripts from Shiraz dropped in the first quarter of the sixteenth century—only about half the number of such manuscripts were produced compared to the last quarter of the fifteenth century¹³—the reduction is more pronounced with respect to the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*: eleven illustrated copies in the last quarter of the fifteenth century compared to two copies in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

The four Safavid manuscripts produced over the first half of the sixteenth century are distinct from each other to an extent that cannot be observed when comparing the many Turkman copies. There, the number of illustrations obviously grew or shrank in accordance with the aim to offer decorated books at different levels of artistic effort and price, whereas preferences for particular chapters or topics remained stable within the group. The more pronounced differences among the few early Safavid *'Ajā'ib* manuscripts point to a shift from supplying an anonymous market to relying on commission, most probably for all four copies and surely for Per. 212. Shedding the habits of the late-fifteenth-century Shiraz workshop production, however, was a slow process.

Through the changes introduced into the text, the second Persian adaptation had been closer tied to *adab* literature.¹⁴ This may, in part, account for the work's success

with the commercial workshops in Shiraz. At the same time, it would diminish its appeal to customers who were primarily interested in information on natural history phenomena. In addition, the artists' training in epic illustration favored narrative images shaped by the decorative and associative character of Shiraz painting of that period. This transformed the cycle of illustrations in the Turkman manuscripts. In the first *maqāla* on the heavens, through replacement of astronomical figures by astrological symbols¹⁵ and omission of explanatory diagrams, the illustrations no longer conformed to Qazwīnī's descriptions. In the second *maqāla* on sublunar phenomena, selective illustration resulted in the disruption of the originally regular relation between keyword and image in the chapters on plants and animals. If one adds to this the poor copying of blatantly deteriorated models and disarranged chapters, mixed-up entries, and misspelled names,¹⁶ one must suspect that the upheavals following the Safavid conquest of Shiraz (1503) were not the only reason for the drop in demand of illustrated *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* manuscripts. To a certain degree, the workshops themselves may have spoiled the market with their careless execution of copies.

The first signs of change can already be spotted in the St. Petersburg *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*. It was copied by Na'im al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dīn al-Auḥādī al-Ḥusaynī¹⁷ in AH 920/1514–15 CE and has 491 illustrations in a "proto-Safavid" style.¹⁸ Still, the manuscript followed the Turkman models in all (even the copying of a disarranged text) but one point: it shows how the link between entry and image was largely restored. Alas, this did not result in improved visual information in the plant chapter, because the tiny illustrations repeat the same kind of stylized plants again and again. Simultaneously, following the lead of the Turkman cycle and paying more attention to story illustration, new narrative subjects were explored.

With the Dublin manuscript of 1545, a thorough reworking of the illustrated *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* was achieved. Its most visible aspect is the return of some elements belonging to the original illustrative cycle of the second Arabic redaction,¹⁹ but without producing stylistic archaisms. As far as its artistic appearance is concerned, the manuscript well fits the period of time indicated by the date in the colophon. Stylistically, it has most in common with manuscripts such as the *Khamṣa* of Niẓāmī of AH 955/1548 CE in the Freer Gallery and the *Majālis al-ūshshāq* of AH 959/1552 CE in the Bodleian Library.²⁰ Many of the paintings make use of the full width of the written surface (18.5 by 9.1 cm [figs. 2 and 6]), and a considerable number of pictures extends into the margins (figs. 3 and 4). Together with the written surface, they are usually enclosed in a broad multicolored frame that became fashionable about the middle of the sixteenth century in Shiraz.²¹

Whereas no attempt was made to lend an antiquarian appearance to the manuscript, some effort was spent on recreating authenticity and adding information. In

the first *maqāla*, the diagrams visualizing the orbits of the planets, the phases of the moon, eclipses, and so on, surface again (fig. 1). Several constellations regain their astronomical shape and some information on their individual stars. The transformation back to astronomical images remains incomplete, however, falling short of a clear break with astrological representation. The stations of the moon, which had been visually neglected in the Persian manuscripts, are again represented by arrangements of stars, as was the case in the Munich manuscript of 1280.²² This in particular indicates that a manuscript of the second Arabic redaction was most probably on hand to check and correct the illustrative cycle of the Persian copy.

If this was so, the Arabic text was not taken into account: no attempt at reintegrating textual information lost in the second Persian adaptation has been detected. The Persian text, in contrast, was checked during the process of copying, as an example shows. Qazwīnī's chapter on the Sun contains a sentence reading, "and now in our time, that is the year..." Here, the first Arabic redaction has AH 661/1262–63 CE, the second AH 678/1280 CE, while the second Persian adaptation for some reason (most probably an early mistake) usually relates AH 658. This unreliable date is kept in the Dublin manuscript, but it is mentioned as a moment of the past.

The second *maqāla* also testifies to the effort to regain the didactic-informative character of Qazwīnī's work. Nearly every plant and animal is depicted, and the quality of the illustrations mostly provides for a true contribution to knowledge on the described object (fig. 6). Chapters on the oceans, with their islands and strange inhabitants of land and sea, and on Earth, with entries on marvelous mountains, rivers, fountains, and wells, are frequently and originally illustrated (fig. 4). Whereas Turkman illustrations of the chapter favored subjects for which the compositional models could be directly transferred from epics, the Dublin manuscript abounds in pictures particular to the Qazwīnī text that display the rich artistic imagination and the humor earlier noticed by Gray. These illustrations testify to the capability of the artists as well as to the attention they paid to nearly all of the 529 subjects depicted.

Of special interest are two interpolations. One appears on folios 228b–229a in the section on the parts of the human body, where two anatomical diagrams are found.²³ The skeleton (fol. 228b [fig. 5]) appropriately falls at the end of the description of bones.²⁴ The second diagram on folio 229a depicting a pregnant woman would have been better located in the short preceding passage on conception, pregnancy, and delivery (fols. 225a–226b). The diagrams are obviously based upon the series of five or six diagrams in the *Tashrīḥ al-insān* of Maṣṣūr b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. Ilyās.²⁵ The absence of text in these folios also follows the *Tashrīḥ al-insān*, where they always fill the entire page and are kept together at the end of the manuscripts. The fact that the interpolation just comprises the first and the last



3

3
The leaders of seven kinds of angels,
fol. 71b.



4

4
The fabulous creatures on the island
of Zābij, fol. 108b.

diagram of the series allows speculation as to whether two folios containing the four other diagrams may have been lost between folios 228 and 229.

This is the first time that the physical description of the human being in the *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* is accompanied by anatomical diagrams.²⁶ It must have happened on special request by the patron, who missed the visual information in this chapter of Qazwīnī's text. Interpolation of the *Tashrīḥ al-insān* images was the most convenient way to remedy the shortcoming. Since part of the text on folio 228a is written diagonally and correctly continues on folio 229b, and the writing does not appear to change, it seems likely the diagrams were part of the original manuscript.

The other instance of incorporation of illustrated text, this time in the first *maqāla*, left traces of an adjustment. In the chapters on the heavenly spheres, where the diagrams of the planets' orbits had returned to their proper places, the planet figures had instead been omitted.²⁷ In the Dublin manuscript, emphasis on the orbits is underlined by creating diagrams even for those three planets that were not provided with them in the second Arabic redaction. Unexpectedly, however, after a last orbit diagram belonging to a passage on the regressive and progressive movement of the planets (at the end of folio 30b), an interpolation starts that again discusses the planets, this time beginning with Saturn. It is illustrated by symbolic figures of the planets (fig. 2).²⁸ The entries focus on the "nature" (*ṭabīʿat*) of the planets and their sympathetic relationship with particular days of the week, parts of the human body, regions, cities, and peoples, social and professional groups, minerals, plants and animals, types of behavior, etc., tracing the full range of influences (*āthār*) of the heavenly bodies on the sublunar world.²⁹

That the heading (*ṣuwar-i kawākib-i sabʿa sayyāra*) appears at the end of folio 30b and was written over a layer of gold that obviously covered the original line of text reveals the interpolation to be an afterthought. On folio 36b, however, with the entry on the Moon completed, the text continues in a regular way with Qazwīnī's chapter on fixed stars. Hence, it looks more like a correction made during the production process due to the wish of the original patron rather than a significantly



5

5

Diagram of the human skeleton, fol. 228b.

later addition. That the figures of the planets share stylistic characteristics with constellation pictures and other miniatures also proves the unity of the manuscript.³⁰

If the interpolation was mainly triggered by the patron's discontent over the initial omission of the planet figures in the copy, the text might have been added to accommodate the pictures. Taking into account the care invested in making the manuscript, it seems more likely that the interpolation on the occult qualities of the heavenly bodies was selected on purpose. At first glance this appears to contradict the tendency reflected in the general "overhaul" of the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* in Per. 212, and in the anatomical interpolation in particular. In fact, the strange combination likely points to the ambiguity that characterizes the development of natural history in early modern times when interest in occult qualities was still prevalent. This is well recorded and thoroughly discussed for Renaissance and post-Renaissance Europe,³¹ but it may have been not so different in the Middle East.³²

The attempt to correct and update the most popular compendium on natural history positions the Dublin manuscript at the crossroads. Looking forward, its lead admittedly was not followed by later sixteenth-century *'Ajā'ib* manuscripts. On the other hand, the attention paid to the constellation images, a thoroughly illustrated chapter on plants, and the addition of anatomical illustrations all foreshadow seventeenth-century developments reflected in the preservation of numerous illustrated manuscripts of *Šuwar al-kawākib*,³³ *Kitāb al-hashā'ish*,³⁴ and *Tashrīḥ al-insān*.³⁵ Those who looked for more detailed and precise information finally turned to those specialized texts, while the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt* became increasingly appreciated because of its entertaining qualities strengthened by narrative illustrations.

Like the recently published research on *Kitāb al-hashā'ish* manuscripts,³⁶ tracing the changes in Qazwīnī's text assists in understanding the treatment of unstable



6

6

Rhinoceros, fol. 460b.

texts and the extent to which they could be adapted to the needs of an individual or a group of patrons. The Dublin *‘Ajā’ib* shows that a commercial workshop obliging a demanding patron might go to some length in order to produce a customized manuscript by procuring the needed sources beyond the model manuscript they copied.

This, surely, does not conform to the description of the Shiraz ateliers left by the sixteenth-century historian Budāq Qazwīnī, who characterized the production of illustrated manuscripts by Shiraz workshops as a family business of fast but thoughtless imitation.³⁷ It has recently been demonstrated that the quality of many Shiraz copies of poetical works, at least those produced since the middle of the sixteenth century, contradicts the biased viewpoints of writers based at court.³⁸ The Dublin *‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt* proves that such a workshop was also able to deal successfully with a specialized commission which asked for a very different kind of compilatory and artistic effort.

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NOTES

- 1 The Persian version, called here the second Persian adaptation, has existed since at least the middle of the fifteenth century. Its most noteworthy modification consists of two interpolated chapters dealing with different peoples and a number of trades and arts. This adds a social component to a text originally intended by its author to be limited to natural history; see Karin Rührdanz, "Illustrated Persian *Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* Manuscripts and Their Function in Early Modern Times," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 33–47. For the text of the second adaptation, see *Zakariyā' b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Makmūnī al-Qazwīnī, Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, ed. Naṣr-Allāh al-Subbūhī (Tehran: Markazi, 1341/1962).
- 2 One painting (fol. 110a) had been published by Arnold in 1928 but was not commented upon; see Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (1928; repr., New York: Dover, 1965), pl. XXXVIIa. The author would like to thank the Chester Beatty Library, and in particular Elaine Wright, for providing images and permission to study the manuscript and to publish some of its illustrations.
- 3 Laurence Binyon, James V. S. Wilkinson, and Basil Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting* (1931; repr., New York: Dover, 1971), pp. 139–40, no. 176, pls. XCVI–XCVII.
- 4 Binyon, Wilkinson, and Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, p. 116.
- 5 Basil Gray, *Persian Painting* (Geneva: Skira, 1961), p. 150 (fol. 109b), p. 152.
- 6 *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures*, vol. 2, ed. Arthur J. Arberry (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1960), pp. 75–77, pls. 34–40. In the meantime, Guest and Stchoukine had mentioned the manuscript; see Grace Guest, *Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1949), p. 60; Ivan Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits safavis de 1502 à 1587* (Paris: Geuthner, 1959), p. 104; and Ettinghausen had referred to it in his iconographic study; see Richard Ettinghausen, *The Unicorn* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1950), pls. 14, 41f.
- 7 Basil W. Robinson, *Persian Miniature Painting from the British Isles* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), p. 102, no. 144.
- 8 While the concept of "unstable" texts (translating the German *unfeste Texte*) is a very broad one, it is used here with respect to the transformation that a medieval prose text undergoes with each subsequent copy. Analysis of the discrete shape of each text helps to clarify its specific function, for a particular public audience, at a certain moment. See Georg Steer, "Gebrauchsfunktionale Text- und Überlieferungsanalyse," in *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Prosaforschung*, ed. Kurt Ruh (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), pp. 5–15.
- 9 Maḥdī Bayānī, *Aḥwāl wa āthār-i khūshnawīsān* (Tehran, 1363/1985), pp. 899–901, no. 1348.
- 10 These numbers are based upon a comparative survey (unpublished) of extant illustrated Persian manuscripts from the last quarter of the fifteenth and the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and biographical material compiled by the author.
- 11 The other three manuscripts are: National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, PNS 265, copied by Na'im al-Dīn Aḥmad, AH 920/1514–15 CE; see G. I. Kostygova, *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi Gosudarstvennoi Publichnoi Biblioteki im. M. E. Saltykova-Shchedrina*, vol. 2 (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennaia

- Publicna Biblioteka, 1989), p. 49, no. 849; National Museum, Tehran, no. 20342, copied by Muḥ'im al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Aḥādī al-Ḥusaynī, AH 924/1518 CE; see Bayānī, *Aḥwāl*, pp. 921–22, no. 1396; and New York Public Library, Spencer, Pers. Ms. 49, 1540s; see Barbara Schmitz et al., *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, and New York: New York Public Library, 1992), pp. 79–93, no. II.5.
- 12 For two well-documented manuscripts of the Turkman group, see Dorothea Duda, *Die illuminierten Handschriften der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Islamische Handschriften, I: Persische Handschriften*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1983), pp. 76–82; vol. 2, Abb. 71–106 (N.F. 155, dated 1492); Basil W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the Collection of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1998), pp. 15–23 (ms. 178).
 - 13 See n. 10. The reasons for this phenomenon still remain to be researched. One was most probably the disruption of the market by the Safavid conquest of southern Iran and the resulting deaths of patrons and artists.
 - 14 Although Qazwīnī's work has long been considered a part of *adab* literature, see Geert J. v. Gelder, "Compleat Men, Women and Books: On Medieval Arabic Encyclopaedism," in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 241–59. The large interpolation and smaller adjustments to the text strengthened the literary element and thus put it on a more equal footing with other components of *adab*; see Rührdanz, "Illustrated Persian *Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* Manuscripts," pp. 37–39.
 - 15 For the concept of astrological versus astronomical representations of the zodiac, see Anna Caiozzo, *Images du ciel d'Orient au Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), in particular vol. 3, pt. 3, pp. 271–316.
 - 16 The disarray is still reflected in the edition (see n. 1).
 - 17 Based upon information in colophons where he mentions his father's name, six manuscripts can be firmly connected to this calligrapher within the period of 1514–15 to 1532–33.
 - 18 For examples of the proto-Safavid style dominating Shiraz production in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, see Lale Uluç, *Turkman governors, Shiraz artisans, and Ottoman collectors: Sixteenth century Shiraz manuscripts* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2006), pp. 85–99.
 - 19 As exemplified by the earliest copy (AH 678/1280 CE) in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (cod. Arab. 464), see Hans-Caspar Graf v. Bothmer, *Die Illustrationen des "Münchener Qazwini" von 1280* (Munich: Universität München, 1971), pp. 160–66. For the differences between the two Arabic redactions (AH 661 and 678) dating back to the author's lifetime (he died in 1283), see Julius Ruska, "Qazwīnistudien," *Der Islam* 4 (1913), pp. 14–66, 236–62.
 - 20 Guest, *Shiraz Painting*, pls. 2–26; Basil W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), pp. 97–102, pl. 14, and the color reproductions with Uluç, *Turkman governors*, p. 190, no. 134; p. 202, no. 144.
 - 21 See Uluç, *Turkman governors*, p. 166ff.
 - 22 Cod. Arab. 464, fols. 25b–30a.
 - 23 In the list of illustrations published in the Chester Beatty Library catalogue (see n. 6), the diagrams appear in the plant chapter. This is due to a misplacement of leaves, which interrupts the chapter on plants between folios 219 and 239. The folios numbered 220 to 238 should follow folio 318.
 - 24 Edition (n. 1), p. 294, line 4.
 - 25 Copies circulated since the early fifteenth century; see Francis Richard, *Splendeurs persanes: Manuscrits du XIIe au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997), p. 82, no. 48. For anatomical diagrams in general, see Emilie Savage-Smith, "Anatomical Illustration in Arabic Manuscripts," in *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. Anna Contadini (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 147–60. On the author and his *Tashrīḥ al-insān*, see Charles A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 2, pt. 2, E. Medicine (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1971), pp. 226–27; Karl Sudhoff, "Eine anatomische Sechsbildserie in zwei persischen Handschriften," in Karl Sudhoff, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Anatomie im Mittelalter* (repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1964), pp. 52–72.
 - 26 It seems Turkman workshops started experimenting by incorporating a tiny diagram of a human skeleton into the chapter on human body parts. It appears in a very sketchy shape in the mutilated fragment of Landberg 406 (third quarter of the fifteenth century) belonging to the Berlin State Library, and it is a clearer drawing in the manuscript R. 1659, dated 1494–95, in the Topkapı Saray Museum Library; see Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 157, fig. 78.
 - 27 The omission became standard in the second half of the sixteenth century. The Dublin *Ajā'ib* and the undated manuscript in the New York Public Library (see n. 11) are the first to document the shift.
 - 28 See folios 30a–36b, where leaves are missing between folios 35b and 36a, including the figures of Venus and Mercury. The

- source of the interpolation is not known. Sequence and content resemble the chapter on planets in Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī's *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*. The interpolation in the Dublin manuscript, however, is more elaborate on the subject and lists many more occult qualities for each planet.
- 29 Qazwīnī uses *khawāṣṣ* when referring to the occult/sympathetic qualities of objects; see Manfred Ullmann, "Khāṣṣa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 1097–98.
- 30 The type of scrolled and knotted cloud bands surrounding the planet figures also appears, although less frequently, on some constellations and other illustrations (compare figs. 2 and 3). In Per. 212 both types of clouds were used: the scrolled knotted bands and the horizontal blurred, whitish stripes. (This was originally a Tabriz convention that arrived in Shiraz in the 1530s; see Uluç, *Turkman governors*, pp. 139–41.) They can be found in other Shiraz manuscripts of the period. In the case of a *Shahnama* in the India Office collection (Ms. 133/ Ethé 863), dated 1560, paintings with both types of clouds were attributed to the same artist; see Basil W. Robinson, *Persian Paintings in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1976), nos. 271 and 275.
- 31 See, for instance, Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 177–88, 200–203; John Henry, "Magic and Science in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Companion to the History of Modern Science*, ed. Robert C. Olby et al. (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 583–96; Keith Hutchinson, "What Happened to Occult Qualities in the Scientific Revolution?" *Isis* 73 (1982), pp. 233–53; Christoph Meinel, "Okulte und exakte Wissenschaften," in *Okulte Wissenschaften in der Renaissance*, ed. August Buck (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), pp. 21–43; and Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (repr., Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 549–602.
- 32 More research on the history of Safavid science is needed. For an approach to the elusive subject through reports of European scholars, see Sonja Brentjes, "Early Modern Western European Travellers in the Middle East and their reports about the sciences," in *Sciences, techniques et instruments dans le monde iranien (Xe – XIXe siècle)*, eds. Nasr-Allah Pourjavadi and Živa Vesel (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran et Presses universitaires d'Iran, 2004), pp. 392–414.
- 33 Sonja Brentjes, "Safavid art, science, and courtly education in the seventeenth century" (this unpublished article was generously provided by the author); on patrons, see Sussan Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 127–30; for reproductions, see *Images of Islamic Science*, vol. 1, ed. Živa Vesel et al. (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 2009), pp. 128–31.
- 34 Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts*, pp. 14, 60. For a copy in Dublin (Per. 273, dated 1645), see *The Chester Beatty Library. A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures*, vol. 3, ed. Arthur J. Arberry (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1962), pp. 44–45, and for another one in St. Petersburg (Oriental Institute, D-143), see Juri A. Petrosjan, *Von Bagdad bis Isfahan* (Lugano: ARCH Foundation, 1995), pp. 264–73; *Images of Islamic Science*, vol. 1, pp. 254–57 (there, too, for a Safavid illustrated copy of the *Materia medica* in Arabic, pp. 252–53).
- 35 See n. 25; for later material, see Schmitz, *Islamic Manuscripts*, pp. 134–35; Andrew J. Newman, "Tašrīḥ-i Maṣnūʿi: Human Anatomy between the Galenic and Prophetical Medical Traditions," in *La Science dans le monde iranien à l'époque islamique*, eds. Živa Vesel, H. Beikbaghban, and Bertrand Thierry de Crussol des Epesses (Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1998), pp. 253–71; more reproductions are found in *Images of Islamic Science*, vol. 1, pp. 236–39.
- 36 George Saliba and Linda Komaroff, "Illustrated Books may be Hazardous to Your Health," *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008), pp. 6–65.
- 37 For an English rendering of the passage, see Oleg F. Akimushkin and Anatol A. Ivanov, "The Art of Illumination," in *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia*, ed. Basil Gray (London: UNESCO, 1979), p. 50.
- 38 Uluç, *Turkman governors*.

PATRON AND CRAFTSMAN OF THE FREER MOSUL EWER OF 1232

*A Historical and Legal Interpretation of the Roles of Tilmīdh and Ghulām
in Islamic Metalwork*

Abstract

The main disciplinary aim of this article is to explore the rich surviving material evidence of inlaid metalwork from Syria and Jazira during the thirteenth century from a socio-legal perspective using legal literature contemporary to its production. Muslim jurists frequently referred to alloy-based metalwork in their discussions of the rules related to trade and commodity exchange. The juridical concern with the sale and transaction of commodities provides a behind-the-scenes look at how metalwork was produced, sold, and purchased and an insight into the otherwise silent world of the craftsman. More specifically, I use legal literature as a means for reexamining the Freer inlaid brass ewer, dated to 1232, within its historical and social context. I argue that the Freer ewer was produced in Mosul not Aleppo, and that it was commissioned as a prestigious gift for the atabeg of Aleppo, Shihab al-Din Tughrul, most probably by his ally Badr al-Din Lu'lu'. This analysis also explains the possible interpretations of the designations *tilmīdh* and *ghulām* (usually interpreted as apprentice) inscribed on the surviving corpus of the Mosul metalwork to which the Freer ewer belongs, and explores the capacity in which Qasim ibn 'Ali signed the Freer ewer as the *ghulām* of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya.

IN HIS JURIDICAL COLLECTION *Minhaj al-Talibin*, written in 1270–71 in the Dar al-Hadith al-Ashrafiyya in Damascus, the famous jurist-scholar al-Nawawi (died 1278) followed a long-established tradition of Muslim legal scholars discussing various types of commercial transactions and their applicability to alloy-based metalwork. Al-Nawawi argued that a buyer or client can only purchase a metal-alloy object that is already available in the market where he can see it and accept its design and general conditions. Advance sales or commissions were not acceptable to al-Nawawi, specifically for metal-alloy objects composed of different parts such as a jug (*kuz*), cup or finger bowl (*tass*), flask (*qumqum*), or cooking pots (*tanajir*).¹ Al-Nawawi, and the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence more generally, displayed deep concern about alloy-based metal objects because they are made out of composite parts and materials and thus, unlike gold or silver, cannot be accurately measured or weighed.² In legal terms, even though one could weigh a brass vessel, one would not have an exact match of it. Hence, the sale or exchange of such metalwork, whether it is plain or decorated, could lead to unlawful gain (*riba*).

Muslim jurists frequently used metalwork as an example when providing detailed explanations of the rules related to trade and commodity exchange. Thus, unlike historians of Islamic art, who are concerned with style, authorship, and patronage, Muslim jurists questioned the contractual obligations associated with the production and sale of metal objects: Who provides raw materials? Who pro-

vides the design? Who performs the actual work? Who funds the process? Who conducts the sale? What type of sale eliminates uncertainty? And what is considered liability in any of these transactions? These questions, which are ultimately aimed at eliminating *riba*, unwittingly tell us about some of the practical issues associated with the sale of metalwork—issues about which conventional art historical methods cannot yet inform us.³ As such, Muslim legal literature has the potential of providing a behind-the-scenes look at how metalwork was produced, sold, and purchased. It suggests a complex social context that allows us to rethink the histories of these objects. More specifically, the social context of Islamic metalwork as understood from Islamic legal texts provides us with new information about the composite network of individuals involved in the production and circulation of the objects. In this paper, I use legal literature to reexamine the Freer inlaid brass ewer, dated 1232 (F1955.22), within its historical and social context, including the work/production relationships implied by the two names inscribed on the ewer.

The Freer Inlaid Brass Ewer of 1232

In their 1985 catalogue *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art*, Esin Atil, W. T. Chase, and Paul Jett published technical studies of some of the Freer collection's metalwork objects. Their analysis highlighted the complex nature of the objects and "how the craftsmen made them."⁴ The authors demonstrate that the Freer brass ewer was made of different parts that were manufactured and decorated in a variety of techniques (figs. 1, 2). The main body of the ewer was probably spun, with the upper part of the neck soldered just below the lower collar of the neck; the lid was made of sheet metal and (possibly) linked with cast hinges; the handle was cast and soldered to the body; the spout and the foot were also soldered. The ewer's composite nature and its various techniques and materials exemplify the physical complexity that legal scholars addressed in their treatises concerning the production and trade of metalwork in the commercial markets of their day.

Until now, art historical studies have not dealt with legal literature, because objects with inscriptions are thought to provide internal evidence of who produced them, for whom, and when. The inscription on the neck of the Freer ewer states that it was made for Shihab al-Din al-Azizi, identified by D. S. Rice as Shihab al-Din Tughrul, the atabeg of the Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo, al-Malik al-'Aziz Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad.⁵ Another inscription on the raised scallops decorating its shoulder states that the ewer was made by ('*amal*) Qasim ibn 'Ali, the *ghulām* (discussed below) of Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya al-Mawsili during Ramadan of the year 1232.⁶ The presence of signatures on Islamic metalwork has been repeatedly interpreted as a sign of the artist's intellectual property. According to Mayer, for example, a signature that includes the terms '*amal* or *sana'ahu* (or their variations) clearly indicates

that the named craftsman was the sole person responsible for making the object in all its stages.⁷ In addition, the name of a person of influence inscribed on an object is typically understood as that of the object's "patron" to the exclusion of a wider range of possibilities, including that the named might represent the recipient of a gift. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this causal understanding of signatures can be misleading because it does not reflect the complex nature of the medieval Islamic market or the multiple networks of craft relationships and object-circulation systems that operated within it.⁸ A closer examination of the Freer ewer's signatures, drawing on legal texts, reveals similar problems and suggests alternative readings of its production and patronage.

The ewer's inverted-pear body shape, the raised scallops at the base of the neck, and the long handle and spout that issue from its shoulder are comparable to around a dozen surviving Mosul ewers of the same period.⁹ The similarity in the sizes and forms of these ewers (which I will discuss in "A Biography of the 13th-century Brass Ewer in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha" in Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom's forthcoming volume, 2013) suggest that the discussion about the Freer object's production and signatures should focus only on the phase that starts after it was bought readymade on the market.¹⁰ Furthermore, later evidence by the Damascene scholar al-Qasimi, who documented the various crafts in Damascus at the turn of the twentieth century, suggests that objects that were taken to a decorator (*naqqash*) were readymade objects purchased elsewhere in the market.¹¹

While the Freer ewer's metal body is similar to that of other Mosul ewers, its decoration is remarkably different. The decoration on the bodies of most Mosul ewers is characterized by poly-lobed cartouches and horizontal fields with a rich variety of figural compositions, T-fret backgrounds, and inscriptions. The decoration of the Freer ewer, however, covers the whole body, thus rendering it as a single field. Its decoration consists of an overall floral composition filling an ogival latticework finely outlined in silver. In addition, the Freer object does not have a single figural image, which makes it unique among the Mosul group.¹² Thus the Freer ewer's decoration raises the following questions: Why is it so different? Can its unique decorative program be linked to the "craftsman/artist" who produced it? Or was it influenced by the "patron" who commissioned it?¹³ These questions draw us back to the signatures on the ewer.

Qasim bin 'Ali, who signed his name as the maker of the Freer ewer, is known to us only from this single signature. We do not have other pieces of metalwork signed by him. Therefore, we cannot ascertain if the floral and split-leaf overall design is his artistic creation or trademark. However, there is a ewer with the same shape in the Louvre signed by Qasim bin 'Ali's master, Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya al-Mawsili (K3435). The decoration of Ibn Mawaliya's ewer is distinctively different from the



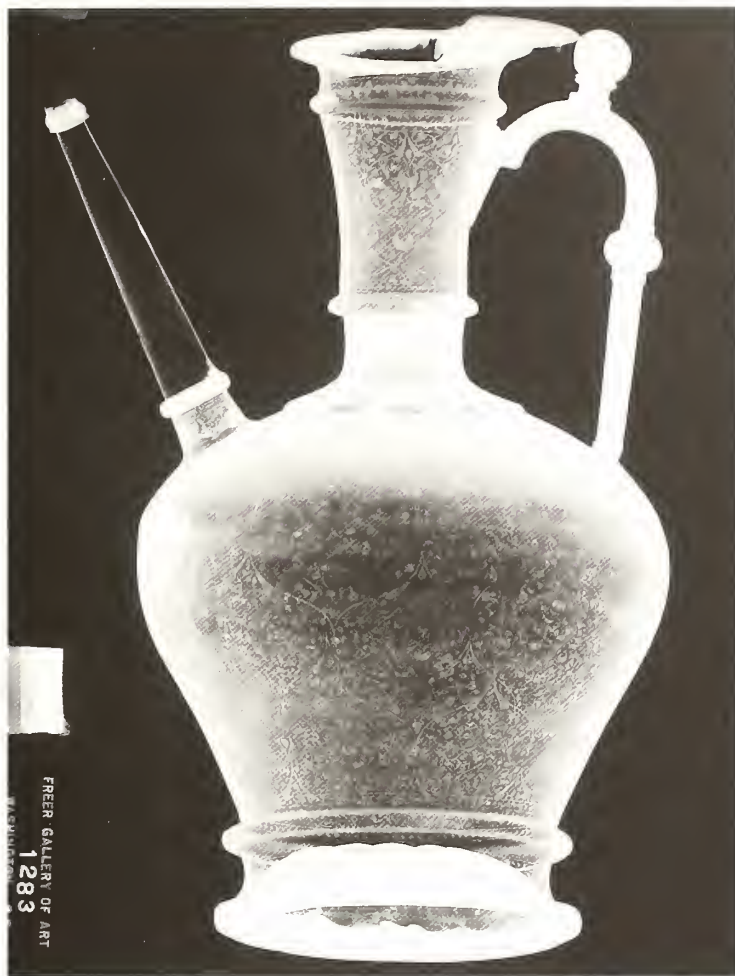
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Brass ewer signed by Qasim ibn 'Ali and dated 1232. Purchase, Freer Gallery of Art, F1955.22.

Freer object, with bands of inscriptions and figural compositions separated by bronze inlaid braids.¹⁴ We also know of another related inlaid object, that of Isma'il ibn Ward, who signed a box dated to 1220 and now in the Benaki Museum of Athens, as the *tilmīdh* (discussed below) of the same Ibn Mawaliya.¹⁵ Not only are the three objects linked through the names of the artists and the *nisba* "Mawsili," the knotted arabesque passing through a loop in the shape of a half-moon that decorates the Freer ewer is also found in the interlace pattern on the base of the Benaki box.¹⁶ My aim here is not to establish a stylistic family but to ask what examples would have been available for a person looking for a decorated ewer without any figures on it. In short, the stylistic details of the Freer ewer are not unique, but their use in an overall design and composition certainly is.

The other inscription on the Freer ewer tells us that it was made for Shihab al-Din Tughrul in AH 629/1232 CE, the same year that al-Malik al-'Aziz assumed full control over his throne in Aleppo. Before his death in 1216, al-Malik al-Zahir named his two- or three-year-old son, Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad, as his successor, and appointed his mamluk, Shihab al-Din Tughrul, as the boy's atabeg. Shihab al-Din ruled Aleppo for fifteen years and then peacefully transferred the rule to the then-teenage al-Malik al-'Aziz Ghiyath al-Din in 1232.¹⁷ Chroniclers of the period are profuse in their eulogies of Shihab al-Din, particularly when they describe his piety and his just rule. They also list his numerous charitable building projects, such



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Radiographic image of the Freer ewer of 1232 (F1952.22). Courtesy Department of Conservation and Scientific Research, Freer Gallery of Art.

as the completion of some of Aleppo's iconic Ayyubid buildings that were commenced by al-Zahir (died 1216), including work on the Aleppo citadel and the Sul-taniyya madrasa in 1232. He is also known to have individually funded projects, including the Atabikiyya madrasa in 1223, and used his personal money to alleviate hardship in times of famine and drought.¹⁸

The inscription's mention of Shihab al-Din by name and the distinctive nonfigural decoration led Rice and then Atil to assert that he commissioned the ewer himself and, therefore, that the ewer was probably made in Aleppo.¹⁹ Rice attributed the nonfigural decoration to Shihab al-Din's known piety or to the fact that the ewer would have been used in a religious context, such as a mosque or madrasa. Due to its uniqueness, the ewer's decoration was beyond doubt commissioned or custom-made rather than produced for the market. However, it is not clear whether Shihab al-Din commissioned the ewer for himself or whether it was ordered for him, and that certainly cannot be determined by a reading of the inscription. The dedicatory inscription, as read by Rice, gives general standard good wishes for Shihab al-Din but does not refer to any involvement by him or by others to the commissioning of the ewer. Let me review the possibilities.

Considering that, as discussed above, it has a similar profile and general dimensions as a number of other Mosul ewers, the body of the Freer ewer was probably mass produced and bought in a market before it was decorated. If Shihab al-Din

was indeed the one who commissioned the Freer ewer, it is likely that he ordered only its decoration. As a pious man, he probably conformed to the predominant view of his day: commissioning alloy-based objects made of soldered parts or different substances was unacceptable because of the possibilities of *riba* that would result from dealing with unknown materials.²⁰ But he could have bought a ready-made ewer (of a determined value) and ordered its decoration. According to Hanafi and Shafi'i law, an advance contract for the decoration of the ewer would have been permissible, but only if the person who ordered the work identified the exact design he wanted and provided the amount of silver to be used in the inlay.²¹ This also implies that he could choose from a set of design patterns provided by the artist, workshop, owner of the shop, or the employer of the person who signed his work as '*amal*'. This seems to be the only possible way for Shihab al-Din to have been the "patron" of the Freer ewer.

A second possibility is that another party ordered the ewer as a present for Shihab al-Din. In his *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Ibn al-Athir (died 1233) mentions the important role Shihab al-Din played in the turbulent politics of the Ayyubids and Zangids in North Syria and Jazira. He managed to maintain Aleppo's neutrality and independence in the face of the competition between Saladin's sons and brothers, as well as the various warring Zangid principalities. Chroniclers of the period like Ibn al-Athir or Ibn Wasil (died 1297–98) compare his role to that of his contemporary Badr al-Din Lu'lu', the atabeg of Mosul.²² Both men were entrusted with serving as atabeg for a minor ruler: the Zangid al-Malik al-Qahir 'Izz al-Din Mas'ud was about ten years old when he became the ward of Badr al-din Lu'lu', and the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Aziz Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad of Aleppo was about two or three years old when he became the ward of Shihab al-Din Tughrul. Both men also maintained a close alliance with the Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, al-Afdal; formed alliances with each other; and patronized and employed the same men. In his biographical account of Ibn al-Athir, the famous biographer Ibn Khillikan (died 1282) mentions that he met the chronicler in Aleppo while he was a guest of Shihab al-Din Tughrul.²³ The presence of Mosul's most famous chronicler at the Aleppo court suggests that there was a friendly relationship between the two rulers. It also confirms that during that period men of letters served as ambassadors between the warring Abbasid, Zangid, and Ayyubid courts. The two men, however, patronized different cultural endeavors and institutions: Badr al-Din was an active patron of architecture, metalwork, and painted manuscripts, while Shihab al-Din seems to have focused on religious and military architecture. Shihab al-Din and Badr al-Din also had different reputations, different ambitions, and different ways of perceiving and acting upon their final duties as atabegs. Indeed, according to the chroniclers, the two atabegs had a parallel career with a single major difference. In 1232, Shi-

hab al-Din surrendered the rule to his ward, al-Malik al-Aziz. Badr al-Din, on the other hand, requested and obtained the title of al-Malik al-Rahim from the Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir, thus usurping the role of his ward and bringing an end to Zangid rule in Mosul. In short, although the two men were equally important, the ambitious Badr al-Din greatly needed Shihab al-Din's support and is known to have sought it on various occasions.

Returning then to the main question, could the Freer ewer have been made as a present for Shihab al-Din by another party, and if so who? Let us consider the evidence: Mosul was the primary production center for inlaid metalwork during the first half of the thirteenth century; there is no evidence that inlaid brass was produced in Aleppo during the same period; Badr al-Din's patronage of metalwork objects has been established; there is a stylistic relationship between the floral design on the Freer ewer and on Mosul objects; there also is a close relationship between Shihab al-din and Badr al-din. The most important evidence, however, is the geographer Ibn Sa'id's famous account that brass objects were made in Mosul and sent as gifts to rulers in the region. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the Freer ewer, with its common shape but distinguishable, nonfigural decorations, was most probably a present from Badr al-Din Lu'lu' to his pious friend Shihab al-Din. This may also explain the significance of the inscribed date of 1232, the same year that Shihab al-din retired from his role as atabeg and withdrew to the Atabikiyya madrasa.

Having situated the Freer ewer in Mosul, I would like now to return to one of the elusive terms mentioned in the inscription, *ghulām*, which indicates some type of relationship between Qasim ibn Ali and Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya al-Mawsili, and examine its meaning under the rubric of Islamic legal literature. The tendency to use the term "apprentice" to discuss signatures like *tilmīdh* or *ghulām* tacitly implies our acknowledgement that the world of medieval craftsmen and their relationship to the market is almost unknown to us. Rice concluded that *ghulām* can be either a slave (*'abd*) or a paid employee (*ajir*), and *tilmīdh* is just an apprentice.²⁴ Legal scholars also distinguish between the status and responsibilities of *tilmīdh* and *ghulām*. In discussing the liability of destroying a commissioned textile, the twelfth-century jurist al-Kasani (died 1191) gave an intriguing example of the *tilmīdh* working for a common textile laborer (*ajir mushtarak*).²⁵ Al-Kasani argued that the *tilmīdh* had to pay restitution to the *ajir mushtarak* if he damaged a piece of cloth due to a mistake that was not work related.²⁶ While the specifics of the example here are related to the textile industry, the jurist's use of the *ajir mushtarak/tilmīdh* combination in a discussion of financial liability highlights two important points for our purposes: 1) that a *tilmīdh* could work for a hired laborer who was himself working for various people at the same time, thus raising the question of workshops and complex

work arrangements; 2) that the *tilmīdh* was liable for damages that he incurred outside of the immediate requirements of his job.

This last point is significant because it demonstrates unequivocally that from a legal perspective the *tilmīdh* was a free man. Legal literature discussing production materials and personal liabilities associated with trade transactions distinguished between slaves and free men. Slaves did not have material rights over the receipt of profit or payment for their work, and they also did not have financial liabilities.²⁷ Contrary to the *tilmīdh* in al-Kasani's example above, then, a slave could not be liable for damages. This confirms Rice's conclusion that the *tilmīdh* was a free apprentice, a student learning from a master, who in the case of the Freer object would have been a metalwork craftsman. Isma'il ibn Ward, who signed the Benaki box of 1220 and a manuscript on prophetic traditions (*Masabih al-Sunna*) in 1249, is one of the first clearly free, Mosul-based metalwork craftsmen known to us.²⁸ Using the name of his teacher Ibn Mawaliya in his signature on the box should not be seen as a sign of servitude, but rather, as Ibn Khaldun explains, a typical sign of pride and solidarity (*wala'*) reflecting a sense of interdependence with a person or group with whom one was affiliated through employment or training.²⁹ The fact that he did not use Ibn Mawaliya's name when he signed the manuscript suggests that by 1249 Ibn Mawaliya was probably dead. As a free man, Ibn Ward had no *wala'* relationship to Ibn Mawaliya's descendants (if there were any) and thus was not compelled to use the name.

The word *ghulām*, however, is much more complex. Ibn al-Athir uses it to mean different things, including servant, soldier, mamluk, and in one case, a Christian trade partner.³⁰ In one narrative the said *ghulām* is clearly a slave and is also referred to as mamluk.³¹ In a different case, the *ghulām* had been appointed as a governor in Mosul after working as a servant of its atabeg in his youth.³² The Christian trade-partner referred to as a *ghulām*, however, was clearly not a slave. This Christian *ghulām* who had a limited partnership with Ibn al-Athir's father was expecting to share in both the profit and the liability, an expectation that indicates his rights over the goods and his freedom.³³

Were the craftsmen who signed their names as *ghulām* on Mosul metalwork slaves? Legal literature of the period is clear: a slave had no ownership or profit rights over objects made or traded on behalf of his or her master. How, then, do we explain signatures of *ghulāms* on luxury items? The first possible way was if the work of a certain slave was exceptional and had become desired enough to become a marketable brand. Another possibility comes from understanding the multiple legal implications of slave status in medieval Islam. A slave could be fully owned (*'abd*), owned with a promise of freedom when the owner died (*mudabbbar*), or owned with a contract toward manumission (*mukatab*). Then there was the freed slave (*ma'tuq*). All these individuals had different legal rights. Could this nuanced

understanding of the term *ghulām* explain the case of Qasim Ibn 'Ali, Ibn Mawaliya's *ghulām*, who signed the Freer ewer? I suggest that the relationship that Ibrahim ibn Mawaliya had with Qasim Ibn 'Ali and Isma'il ibn al-Ward was a waged employment or *ijara*. Both employees, however, may have been craftsmen of different legal statuses, with Isma'il ibn al-Ward a free employee and Qasim ibn 'Ali a manumitted or a *mukatab* slave. These employees would not be expected to sign their work unless, perhaps, they became famous in their own right or gained their independence from the master. Yet both would still be expected to have a *wala'* relationship with that master, possibly acknowledging him in their names and signatures even after manumission or the end of the apprenticeship period. Here again, the legal concept of *wala'* for a freed slave, which includes both emotional and financial interdependence with the ex-owner, can explain the perpetuation of the term *ghulām* in a brand or signature.

Seen through the lens of social and legal context then, the Mosul inlaid brasses represent an active period of production and patronage that served both local and external trade markets. In addition to the famous accounts by Ibn Sa'id and Ibn al-Jawzi, the relatively high number of surviving luxury brasses and the variety of their decorative programs and inscribed names attest to such commercial activity. Migrant craftsmen from Central Asia and Khurasan fleeing the Mongol invasion must have vastly influenced the inlay workers in Mosul. We know from the surviving forms that the incoming craftsmen worked on objects whose shapes and forms reflect a local tradition.³⁴ Craftsmen, whether migrant or itinerant, adapted their knowledge to local needs and market traditions. They also must have worked with local craftsmen in response to the high demand and perhaps trained a cohort of slave-craftsmen. Exploring these trade relationships provides an opportunity to understand the context in which objects like the Freer ewer were commissioned and produced. By the time that Badr al-Din Lu'lu' would have possibly commissioned the Freer ewer as a present for Shihab al-Din Tughrul in 1232, brass inlay production in Mosul was an established and well-known trade. The ewer was clearly an appropriate royal gift from one ruler to the other.

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NOTES

- 1 Muhyi al-Din Abu Zakariyya Yahya bin Sharaf al-Nawawi, *Minhaj al-Talibin* (Beirut: Dar al-Basha'ir al-Islamiyya, 2000), vol. 2, p. 79.
- 2 For a detailed discussion of the juristic concern with the exchange value of brass-alloy objects, see R. Kana'an, "The *de jure* 'Artist' of the Bobrinski Bucket: Production and Patronage in pre-Mongol Khurasan and Transoxiana," *Islamic Law and Society* 16 (2009), pp. 175–201.
- 3 The argument that juridical collections reflect real social and economic practices has been long demonstrated, especially for pecuniary transactions (*mu'amalat*) in the Hanafi school. For a fuller discussion see Abraham L. Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 4–12; and for a specific example, see Kana'an 2009, pp. 183–88.
- 4 Esin Atil, W. T. Chase, and Paul Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1985), p. 33.
- 5 D. S. Rice first identified Shihab al-Din in "Studies in Islamic Metalwork–II," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 1, no. 15 (1953), pp. 67–69. For Shihab al-Din's important role in Aleppo, see Kamal al-Din Abu al-Qasim 'Umar bin Ahmad bin Hibat Allah Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab min Tarikh Halab*, ed. Sami al-Dahhan (Damascus: Institut Francais du Damas, 1968), vol. 3, pp. 921–57, and D. S. Richards, *Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-kamil fi al-tarikh* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pt. 3, pp. 169–70. For his architectural patronage, see Yasser Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), pp. 38–39.
- 6 Rice 1953, pt. 1, p. 67, and Atil 1985, p. 118.
- 7 L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Metalworkers and Their Works* (Geneva: Albert Kundig, 1959), p. 12. See also Ahmad Ghabin, *Hisba, Arts and Crafts in Islam* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag) 2009, pp. 252–53.
- 8 Kana'an 2009, and J. W. Allan, "Muhammad ibn al-Zain: Craftsman in Cups, Thrones and Window Grills?" *Levant* 28 (1996), pp. 199–208, esp. 206–7.
- 9 Examples from the first half of the thirteenth century include: ewer signed by Ahmad Ibn 'Umar al-Dhaki, dated to 1223, Cleveland Museum of Art, no. 56.11; ewer signed by 'Umar ibn al-Hajj Jaldak, 1226, Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 91.1. 586; ewer signed by Iyas, the *ghulam* of Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi and dated 1229, Türk ve Islam Müzesi, no. 217; ewer signed by Ibrahim Ibn Mawaliya, Musée du Louvre, no. K3435; ewer with the name of Sultan Mahmud ibn Sanjar Shah, Doha Museum of Islamic Art (previously Nuhad Es-Said Collection, no. MW 466.2007); ewer at the Musée des Arts décoratifs, no. 4413; ewer signed by Ali ibn Abdallah al-Alawi, Museum für Islamische Kunst, no. I-6580; ewer signed by Yunus Ibn Yusuf, dated to 1246, Walters Art Museum, no. 54.456; the faceted Blacas ewer signed by Shuja' ibn Manna', dated to 1232, British Museum, no. OA 1866.12-29.61; the Homberg ewer signed by Ahmad al-dhaki and dated to 1242, Kier Collection, no. 131; and the ewer signed by Husayn b. Muhammad and dated to 1258, Musée du Louvre, no. 7428. For the Mosul provenance for the ewers, see Julian Raby, "The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of 'the Mosul School of Metalwork,'" in *Metalwork and Material Culture in the Islamic World: Art, Craft, and Text*. Essays Presented to James W. Allan. Venetia Porter and Mariam Rosser-Owen, eds. (London, 2012,

- forthcoming). For the use of a "brass ewer" for ablution in Mosul, see Ibn Al-Athir, Izz al-Din, *al-tarikh al-bahir fi al-dawlah al-atabikiyah*, ed. A. A. Tolaymat (Cairo: Dar al-kutub al-hadithah, 1963), p. 31.
- 10 We do not currently have definitive evidence for the mass production of standard, undecorated objects in the thirteenth century. In discussing the craft of the *nahhas* for the turn-of-the-twentieth century Damascus, however, Muhammad Sa'id Qasimi, Jamal al-Din Qasimi, and Khalil Azm, *Qamus al-Sina'at al-Shamiyah*, ed. Zafir Qasimi (Damascus: Dar Tlas li 'Idirasat wa 'I-tarjama wa 'I-nashr, 1988), pp. 479–80, explains that the *nahhas* bought sheet brass, some of which he made to order according to buyers' requests and specifications, and some he made into standard shapes and sold them ready-made in his shops. Similar arguments for the division of use and manufacturing of sheet brass were made by Hans E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), p. 22.
 - 11 Qasimi et al. 1988, pp. 486–87.
 - 12 The ewer signed by Iyas, the *ghulam* of Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi and dated 1229 (Türk ve İslam Müzesi, no. 217), is also devoid of any figural images. See D. S. Rice "Studies in Islamic Metalwork—III," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953), pp. 229–32. In "The inscription on the astrolabe by 'Abd al-Karim in the British Museum," *Muqarnas* 21 (2004), pp. 345–57, Rachel Ward proposes a new possible provenance for the workshop of Abd al-Karim ibn al-Turabi in Mayyafariqin.
 - 13 L. Komaroff, *The Golden Disk of Heaven: Metalwork in Timurid Iran* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), pp. 139–42 raises a similar question about Timurid metalworkers and their relationship with patrons.
 - 14 Rice 1953, pt. 1, pp. 69–79.
 - 15 Ibid., pp. 61–65.
 - 16 The half-palmette scroll passing through a half-moon loop or knob motif (with slight stylistic variations) is often found on inlaid metalwork from thirteenth-century Jazira, including objects attributed to Mosul, like the tray made for Badr al-Din Lu'lu' now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
 - 17 Ghrighuryus ibn Harun al-Malti Ibn al-'Ibri, *Tarikh Mukhtasar al-Duwal* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1958), p. 231, uses the terms *al-khadim* (the servant) and *manluk* to refer to Shihab al-Din. In his translation of the Syriac chronicle of the world by Ibn al-'Ibri (also known as Bar Hebraeus), Ernest Budge refers to Shihab al-Din as a "just and merciful eunuch" who introduced prosperity and peace to Aleppo. See Ernest Wallis Budge, ed., *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj, the son of Aaron the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, vol. 1 (Oxford London: University Press, 1932), p. 369.
 - 18 Izz al-Din ibn Shaddad, *Al-A'laq al-Khatira Fi Dhikr Umara' al-Sham wa 'I-Jazira: Tarikh Halab*, ed. D. Sourdel (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1953), p. 114, and Tabbaa, *Constructions of Power and Piety*, pp. 38–39.
 - 19 The only other inlaid metalwork object attributed to Aleppo is the Louvre Barbarini Vase, no. OA 4090, which bears the name of the last Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo, al-Malik al-Nasir Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn al-Malik al-Aziz, who ruled between 1237 and 1260. Here again the Barbarini vase's attribution to Aleppo and its inclusion as an example of Ayyubid metalwork is based only on the fact that it bears the name of the ruler of Aleppo.
 - 20 Ala' al-Din Abu Bakr ibn Mas'ud al-Kasani, *Kitab Bada'i' al-Sana'i' fi tartib al-shara'i'* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Jammaliyya, 1910), vol. 6, pp. 84–85. Al-Kasani is important in this context because the first teacher in the Atabikiyya madrasa appointed by Shihab al-Din Tughrul was al-Kasani's student, Jamal al-Din al-Qurashi al-Hawrani.
 - 21 Both the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of Islamic law were dominant in Syria and Jazira. Shihab al-Din himself established schools and arranged support for Hanafi scholars. In his capacity as the de facto successor of al-Malik al-Zahir, however, he also established Shafi'i schools and endowments to support Shafi'i scholars. I refer to both Hanafi and Shafi'i jurists throughout this article. Al-Kasani's teacher (and father-in-law) Ala' al-Din al-Samarqandi, *Tulifat al-Fuqaha'* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 11–14, also argued that one could order an object in advance only if all its characteristics were fully known. For a similar Shafi'i view, see Al-Nawawi, *al-minhaj*, p. 79.
 - 22 For a comprehensive chronicle of the Ayyubids and Zangids for the period, see Izz al-Din Ibn Al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-tarikh*, ed. 'Umar abd al-salam al-tadmuri (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1997). For the atabegs of Mosul until the rule of Badr al-Din Lu'lu', see Izz al-Din Ibn Al-Athir, *Al-tarikh al-bahir fi al-dawlah al-atabikiyah*, ed. A. A. Tolaymat (Cairo, Dar al-kutub al-hadithah, 1963). For the reign of Badr al-Din, see Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Din Lu'lu': The Atabeg of Mosul, 1211–1259* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991).
 - 23 Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Khillikan, *Wafayat al-A'yan wa anba' al-zaman* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1998), vol. 3, p. 305.

- 24 Rice 1953, pt. 1, p. 67.
- 25 R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1993), pp. 22–25, discusses the notion of the common employee who works for several people at the same time. The distinction between the private *ajir* and the common *ajir* is prevalent in legal literature. Al-Kasani 1910, vol. 4, p. 174 also refers to the private *ajir* as ‘*ajir al-wahd*’.
- 26 Al-Kasani 1910, vol. 4, p. 212, where he also uses *tilmīdh* and *ustadhl*.
- 27 Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Habib Al-Mawardi, *Al-Hawi al-Kabir fi Fiqh al-Imam al-Shafi’i*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1999), pp. 368–74, and vol. 7, p. 40. Al-Nawawi 2000, vol. 2, p. 178.
- 28 Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, no. 3130. D. James, “An Early Mosul Metalworker: Some New Information,” *Oriental Art* 26, no. 3 (1980), pp. 318–21.
- 29 Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, *Kitab al-‘Ibar* (Beirut: Mu’asasat al-‘Alami li’l-Matbu’at, 1971), vol. 1, p. 114, differentiates between a person affiliated through slavery (*mawla al-riq*) and a person affiliated through training, education, fostering, or employment (*mawla wala’ or istina’*). Al-Kasani 1910, vol. 4, pp. 159, 170. See also Paul G. Forand, “The Relationship of the Slave and the Client to the Master or Patron in Medieval Islam,” *IJMES*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1971), pp. 59–66.
- 30 Ibn al-Athir 1997, pp. 31, 49, 72, and 155.
- 31 Ibid., p. 21.
- 32 Ibid., p. 199.
- 33 Al-Nawawi uses *ghulām* to mean a free employee (*al-ajir al-hurr*) in the marginal commentary on Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Ali bin Yousuf al-Fayruzabadi al-Shirazi, *Al-Tanbih fi al-fiqh al-Shafi’i*, ed. Ayman Salih Sha’ban (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1995), p. 143.
- 34 J. W. Allan, “Concave or Convex? The Sources of Jaziran and Syrian Metalwork in the 13th Century,” in *The Art of Syria and Jazira 1100–1250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 127–39.

AN ARTUQID CANDLESTICK FROM THE AL-AQSA MUSEUM

Object as Document

Abstract

This article discusses a particular candlestick that in its form, decoration, and inscriptions can be seen as a paradigmatic “document” that can help define and map an historical moment in southeastern Turkey. The candlestick is currently housed in the al-Aqsa Museum on the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. It is made of brass, inlaid with silver, and decorated all around with an arcade of pointed arches resting on columns. In the space between the arches appears an inscription identifying the patron as Artuq Arslan Ibn Ilghazi Ibn Artuq, who ruled the principality of Mardin in southeastern Turkey from 1201 to 1239 CE. To my mind, the arcade around the candlestick is greatly reminiscent of the hewn-stone blind arcade that decorated the façade of certain religious buildings in the principality of Mardin. The appearance of the ruler-patron’s name on the candlestick might declare “Mardin—C’est moi,” thus conveying a message of local identification. Viewed from this perspective, the candlestick could have been sent from Mardin to Jerusalem as a gift, a salute to the Muslim triumph over the Crusaders (perhaps upon the return of Jerusalem to Islam in 1244). The prolonged encounters between the Artuqid rulers and Jerusalem are well documented and imply the plausible participation of Mardin in such an event.

BY MAKING THE FORM, DECORATION, AND INSCRIPTION of a particular candlestick into a paradigmatic “document” (fig. 1), we can define and map an historical moment in southeastern Turkey in the mid-thirteenth century.¹ The candlestick is currently housed in the al-Aqsa Museum on the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. The broad, polygonal body of the brass candlestick has fourteen sides that gradually taper upward, giving it a bell-like shape.²

The base is decorated with two bands: the lower one is plaited and inlaid with silver and gold, while the upper one has a series of pointed arches, each composed of three lobes, of which the two lateral ones resemble *muqarnas* in shape. They are embossed and in high relief. The central part of the candlestick body is encircled by an arcade with pointed arches supported by pillars, capitals, and bases, all of which are embossed as well. Pointed arches also decorate the upper part of the body of the candlestick and are filled with an arabesque composed of two interlaced palmettes.

Within the arches an inscription in cursive script engraved and inlaid with silver identifies the patron as Artuq Arslan, son of Ilghazi Ibn Artuq, who ruled in Mardin and Mayyafariqin in southeastern Turkey from 594 to 634 AH (1201–39 CE). The inscription reads (fig. 2):



1

¹
An Artuqid candlestick made in Mardin, Turkey, 1201–39. With the permission of al-Aqsa Museum, Jerusalem.

عز لمولانا الملك العالم العادل المؤيد المظفر المنصور ناصر الدنيا والدين
قطب الاسلام والمسلمين ارتق ارسلان ابن ايلغازي ابن ارتق ظ[ا]هر امير
المؤمنين ادام الله ظله وعز نصره

Glory to our lord, the king, the ruler, the wise, the just, helped by God, the triumphant, the victorious, the protector of the world and faith, the leader of Islam and Muslims, Artuq Arslan Ibn Ilghazi Ibn Artuq, the supporter of the commander of the believers, may God make his patronage last forever and glorify his victory.

The cursive script is clearly legible, with its full use of diacritical and orthographic marks, although the cramped space between the arches forced the artist-calligrapher to overlap some of the characters. The letters are distinguished by their compactness, and the *alif* and *lam* have a tapered, angular appearance. From a stylistic viewpoint, the inscription resembles those appearing on buildings in Syria during the Ayyubid period, which “had become standard for all public inscriptions, not only in Syria but also in upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia, North Africa, and Spain.”³

Above this inscription is another smaller graffito, which appears to be a later addition. It is clear from this that the candlestick was passed to Artuq Arslan’s son and successor, Najm al-Din Ghazi I, presumably after Artuq Arslan’s death in AH 637/1239 CE.⁴ The inscription reads:



2

2
A view of the inscriptions on the Artuqid candlestick. With the permission of al-Aqsa Museum, Jerusalem.



3

3
Details of the inscriptions on the Artuqid candlestick. With the permission of al-Aqsa Museum, Jerusalem.

هذا ابو... السلطان الملك المنصور [ر] نجم الدنيا والدين ابي الفتح غازي ابن ارتق
عز نصره [حادن باد ؟] اعاد الله من بركاته

This is ... of the sultan the king, the victorious, najm al-dunya wa'l-din, father of victory, Ghazi ibn Artuq [may Allah] glorify his victory. Allah will restore his blessings.

It should be noted that the main inscription is divided among the spaces between the fourteen arches. The smaller inscription, the graffito, appears in the space of some, but not all, of the arches. However, in one instance only (fig. 3), in the space of one arch, there is a correlation between the words appearing in the two inscriptions: in the main inscription appears the word *عز نصره* and above this, in the very same space in the graffito inscription, are the words *ارتق عز نصره*. Both thus express a supplication for God's blessing on the ruler: *[May Allah] glorify his victory*. The main inscription relates to the father, Artuq Arslan; the graffito addresses the son, Ghazi Ibn Artuq.

Although these inscriptions present stereotypical formulae (*formula banale*)⁵ typical of those appearing on medieval objects and buildings, it would seem that the "encounter" between these identical words in one space in the same arch creates a clear dynastic declaration. It grants ruling legitimacy, by the grace of God, not only to the father but also to the son, who apparently had the smaller inscription engraved after his father's death.

As with texts, objects can also convey both information and meaning. Such meaning is threefold. The initial meaning relates to the objects' functionality and materiality. The second meaning is encoded or inherent in them, and it is this that communicates and conveys messages; it is their symbolic meaning. Finally, objects bear past association, and this is their historical meaning.⁶

To analyze and interpret the meaning of this particular candlestick, I shall first examine the "solid data": its form, decoration, and inscriptions within the cultural context in which it was created during the period mentioned. I shall then attempt to



4

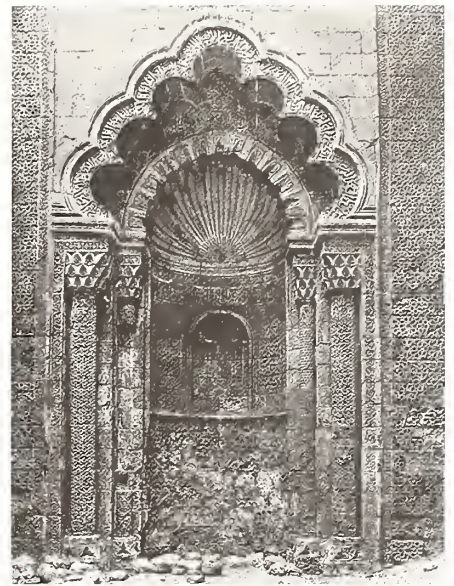
4

A frieze of blind arches on the northern façade of the Great Mosque (1152–57) at Mayyafariqin (Sylvan). With the permission of Sharon Talmor, Tel Aviv.

read the candlestick as a bearer of an historical “story” and to decipher the narrative of its “memories” while mapping its physical movement or portability along possible and relevant routes through the Jazira subzone and Bilad al-Sham.

The Mardin candlestick is bare of any figurative images. It serves, however, as a base for architectonic elements and decorations, such as arched arcades, individual arches, *muqarnas*-like ornaments, geometrical ribbonwork, arabesques, and inscriptions. As noted earlier, some of these decorations are embossed and present three-dimensional elements that endow the candlestick with a sculptural dimension. Others are engraved, flat, and merge with the surface. It can be stated that this unique object, apparently made in Mardin or its environs, is decorated with elements that recall the stone decorations on the façades of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Anatolian buildings, particularly in Mardin, Dunaysir (Kiziltepe), Diyarbakir (Amida), and Mayyafariqin (Sylvan).

Following the triumph of Islam over the Byzantine Empire at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and the penetration of Turkoman groups into Asia Minor, the process of conversion to Islam in southeastern Anatolia reached its peak in the twelfth century.⁷ In the early thirteenth century the region flourished both economically and culturally. The numerous caravanserais, mosques, madrasas, and mausolea that were built along the trade routes in Anatolia present some striking façade decoration using cut-stone masonry.⁸ Notable among these are two groups of decoration types. One of them presents carved stone reliefs of stalactites, half-domes, colon-



5

5
The mihrab of the Great
Mosque of Dunaysir (Kiziltepe)
(1184–1204). After A. Gabriel,
*Voyages archéologiques dans la
Turquie Orientale/avec un recueil
d'inscriptions arabes par Jean
Sauvaget* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1940),
pl. XXXI.

naded arcades, and various types of arches—pointed, polylobed, and cusped—a kind of arcuated system that contributes a dynamic element to the architecture. The second group presents flat decorations spread over the walls as a sort of web or textile in geometrical forms and arabesques.

Examples from Mardin and its environs are numerous. A double arcade of columns and arches can be seen on the northern façade in the Great Mosque of Mayyafariqin (Sylvan) that was built from 1152 to 1157.⁹ Although this façade underwent changes in 1913, it can still be recreated from photographs. The characteristic element is a lateral strip above a row of windows, a sort of frieze of pointed blind arches set upon low, broad, ribbed columns (fig. 4). The arches resemble the teeth of a saw.

Variations of arch compositions and lobed moldings are also seen in the portals and mihrabs in Madrasa al-Zinciriyya (1195)¹⁰ and in Madrasa Mas'udiyya (1193–94) in Diyarbakir,¹¹ as well as in Dunaysir (Kiziltepe), where according to the inscription on the lobed arch of the mihrab¹² (fig. 5), the building was begun by Yuluq Arslan (1184–1203) and completed in AH 601/1204 CE by his brother Artuq Arslan, whose name appears on our candlestick. A lobed arch also decorates the portal to the prayer hall in the same mosque (fig. 6). *Muqarnas*-shaped decoration similar to that on the candlestick can be found, for example, in the mosque and hospital in Divrigi (1228–29) (fig. 7), which is one of the first buildings in which three-dimensional stone decoration was used.¹³

This brief and partial comparison has revealed the close resemblance between the images on the candlestick and those that can be seen on certain buildings in the principality of Mardin, dating from the reign of Artuq Arslan (1201–39). Albeit reduced in scale, the brass object from Mardin nonetheless possesses all the characteristics of the Anatolian façades.

Similarities between contemporary buildings of that period and the candlestick also extend to the inscription within the arcade arches on the object. This is not an inscription invoking blessings and good wishes for the owner, such as those that usually appear on metal objects in Iran or northern Mesopotamia from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,¹⁴ but one on which the *laqab* (honorific titles), *kunya*, the *ism*, the *nasab*, and at the end the *nisba* are of Artuq Arslan. This is reminiscent



6

6

The portal to the prayer hall of the Great Mosque at Dunaysir (Kiziltepe) (1184–1204). With the permission of Sharon Talmor, Tel Aviv.



7

Muqarnas-shaped decoration on the Divrigi Mosque and Hospital (1228–29). From Dogan Kuban, *The Miracle of Divrigi* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Kultur Merkezi, 1997), pp. 146–47.

of the public foundation inscriptions, with their stereotypical formulae that convey the political, dynastic, and religious messages, also found on the Seljuq of Rum buildings as well as on earlier Zengid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk buildings.¹⁵

Transferring the formula seen on the façades of buildings enlisted to religious Sunni ideology to the candlestick's "façade" was not a random occurrence. It perhaps indicates Artuq Arslan viewed the candlestick as an object for the dissemination of his name in his role as the defender of Sunni Islam and its ideology.

It is worthy of mention that dedications of this kind can be found on other objects created during the same period and in the same region, such as an Ayyubid basin now housed at the University of Michigan Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.¹⁶ It was made in honor of the last Ayyubid prince, Najm al-Din Ayyub, who resided in Diyarbakir from 1232 to 1238 before moving to Damascus and then Egypt while he attempted to maintain his rule over the Jazira through his son, Turanshah. The wording of that inscription, *mutatis mutandis*, is identical to the one on our candlestick.

It is reasonable to assume that the Ayyubid basin, which was described and analyzed by Oleg Grabar in 1962, was created in the Diyarbakir region in the first half of the thirteenth century. It would therefore seem that certain objects from those regions, as well as the façades of various public buildings, were all enlisted to the same purpose: dynastic propaganda.¹⁷

Connections between the Artuqids and the Ayyubids in this area in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are well documented.¹⁸ Artuq Arslan saw his loyalty fluctuating between the overlordship of the Rum Seljuqs and the Ayyubids of Syria.¹⁹ Between 1226 and 1234, for instance, he switched his allegiance three times for political expediency, as is clearly manifested by the inscriptions on the coins he issued.²⁰

That being so, by means of the architectonic features characteristic of the locality, the candlestick thus bears with it the memory of Mardin. In other words, it represents the principality of Mardin and its ruler, Artuq Arslan, whose name is

inscribed upon it. The graffito inscription added by his son, Ghazi, brings him into the “story” by declaring the dynasty’s continuation and power.

Is it possible to suggest a reason why this object was made? Could it have been created for a specific event at which Artuq Arslan sought to announce independence and freedom from the yoke of fealty to the Ayyubids? Such an event could have occurred in 1234, when the Ayyubids lost control of the Jazira to the Seljuq Kaiqubad, who temporarily conquered Edessa and Harran. Swiftly recovering their power, the Ayyubids sought to wreak vengeance on the Artuqids, who had supported the Seljuqs by taking Dunaysir from them. Fortunately for the Artuqids, the Mongol invasion prevented the Ayyubids from bringing their plans to fruition. We know Artuq Arslan minted a coin to commemorate the occasion.²¹ By the same token he could have commissioned the candlestick bearing his name as an independent ruler who was not subject to the Ayyubids or the Seljuqs.

As we have seen so far, the candlestick has not only a patron for whom it was made but also an estimated date of when it was made. We cannot, however, determine with certainty the fate of the candlestick after Ghazi’s death in AH 658/1260 CE or when it left Mardin, nor do we know when and how it reached Bilad al-Sham, or Jerusalem. If we adopt the “pluritopic” model proposed by Eva Hoffman,²² however, we can, in the medieval geopolitical context of the Jazira and the Mediterranean region in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, suggest a number of alternative narratives in mapping the candlestick’s route.

Mehmet Tütüncü’s assumption—that it was brought to al-Aqsa as a *waqf* by the Khwarazmians, who controlled Jazira and Mardin at one time and who may have brought the candlestick with them to Jerusalem when they invaded the city in 1244—could be possible, albeit it cannot be proven.²³ According to Ibn al-Jawzi (died 1259), in 1237 the Khwarazmians looted the treasure of Badr al-Din Lu’lu’, the *atabeg* of Mosul (reigned 1211–59), and took many precious metalwork items.²⁴ Could this also have been the fate of the Mardin candlestick?

As it happens, the Artuqids and Jerusalem indeed had a common historical memory, as an examination of the relations between Mardin and Jerusalem in the Middle Ages reveals.²⁵ In the summer of 1098, the Fatimid vizier al-Afdal invaded Bilad al-Sham and laid siege to Jerusalem.²⁶ The city was in the hands of Suqman and Il-Ghazi—the sons of Artuq, founder of the Artuqid dynasty, who died in 1091—and was under the aegis of the Seljuq emir of Damascus, Taj al-Dawla Tutush, until Jerusalem surrendered to the Fatimids.²⁷

In 1099 Jerusalem was conquered by the Crusaders. In 1152 members of the Artuqid dynasty attempted a campaign against Jerusalem led by Yaruq Timurtash, the ruler of Mardin, but they were vanquished and massacred by the Crusaders. There is no room for doubt that, like the Zengids and Ayyubids, the Artuqids

were supporters and promoters of Sunni Islam and jihad.²⁸ They were involved in establishing numerous madrasas in their realm, and religious studies flourished in Dunaysir in the thirteenth century.²⁹ Artuq Arslan was responsible for having the mihrab at Dunaysir decorated with numerous verses from the Koran. Furthermore, from Ibn al-'Adim (Aleppo, 1192–1262), we know that Sufis from Mardin went to live in Jerusalem in order to be buried there.³⁰

In the 1229 peace treaty of Jaffa, Jerusalem was ceded to the Crusaders and the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II. It was liberated only fifteen years later, in 1244, by the Khwarazmians, whose homeland on the shores of the Caspian Sea had been lost, and they had been forced westward by the Mongols.

The shock suffered by the Muslim world with the handing over of Jerusalem to the Crusader infidels was severe, and it undoubtedly touched the very soul of the Artuqids. It is entirely possible that upon Jerusalem's restoration to Islam in 1244, Najm al-Din Ghazi sought to present the candlestick on behalf of himself and his father, Artuq Arslan, the deceased former ruler of Mardin. It is possible that his father had perhaps even intended to transfer it to Jerusalem, but he had not managed to do so before his death. It is also reasonable to assume that his son, Najm al-Din Ghazi, had wanted to be identified with the figure of Salah ad-Din, who had sent the Nur ad-Din *minbar* as a gift from Aleppo to al-Aqsa.³¹

This splendid candlestick may thus have been intended to commemorate faithfully the city of Mardin, whose metaphoric image is reflected in its architectonic elements. Its purpose may have been to represent the father-patron Artuq Arslan and his son-patron Najm al-Din Ghazi as one entity.

The candlestick's journey from Mardin to Jerusalem extended beyond a physical route. The memories, associations, and meanings it still bears make it a document of its times.

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NOTES

This paper is dedicated to Professor Oleg Grabar—mentor, friend, and colleague—who accompanied me throughout this work with his inspiring and generous advice until his death. I shall sorely miss him.

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- 1 Several scholars have addressed this object. See Marwan Abu Khalaf, "Three Candlesticks from the Islamic Museum of al-Haram al-Sharif, Jerusalem," *Levant* 20 (1988), pp. 238–40; Mehmet Tütüncü, "About a Candlestick of Artuk Arslan in Jerusalem," in *1st. International Symposium of Artuq Papers*, vol. 2, ed. Ibrahim Ozcosar (Mardin: Artukluar Mardin Valiligi Kultur Yayini, 2007), pp. 111–18 (in Turkish).
- 2 Its body is approximately 31 cm in diameter; its overall height is 39 cm; the neck is 20 cm high and clearly is not the original but a later replacement.
- 3 Yasser Tabbaa, "The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 2, the Public Texts," *Ars Orientalis* 24 (1994), p. 132. According to Tabbaa, inscriptions in this style originated in the period of Nur al-Din and are related to the stylistic variations that characterize the "Sunnī Revival." Tabbaa demonstrates this style of writing in the inscriptions of the Aleppo citadel from the early thirteenth century. The inscription on the candle-

stick presents a style of writing close to that of Aleppo.

- 4 Graffiti on medieval metal objects offer an interesting subject in themselves. Numerous Ayyubid-period objects bear engraved inscriptions in a careless, cursive script, which usually indicates the object was designated for a location in a specific room (generally a vestuary is mentioned), and it belonged to one ruling personality or another. Sometimes the graffiti appear on the edge of or inside the object, while the "canonical" inscription is displayed centrally in meticulous script. Frequently, as in the present case, the graffito marks a change of ownership and reveals who "inherited" or received the object after its owner's death. See D. S. Rice, "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Ahmad al-Dhaki al-Mawsili," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 319–20; D. S. Rice, "The Oldest Dated 'Mosul' Candlestick A.D. 1225," *The Burlington Magazine* 91 (December 1949), pp. 334–41. Our candlestick does not indicate a place of storage, but it does show who "inherited" it: Najm al-Din Ghazi, the son of Artuq Arslan. In this sense the content of the graffito on the candlestick differs from those found on Ayyubid objects.
- 5 Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Inscriptions* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).
- 6 See Ian Hodder, "The Contextual Analysis of Symbolic Meanings," in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 12.
- 7 V. L. Menage, "The Islamization of Anatolia," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1979), pp. 52–67.
- 8 Oleg Grabar, "Trade with the East and the Influence of Islamic Art on the 'Luxury Arts' in the West," in *Islamic Visual Culture, 1100–1800* (Hampshire: Ashgate

- Publishing, 2006), p. 45, first published in *Il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del xiii secolo*, ed. H. Belting (Bologna: CLUEB, 1982), pp. 27–32.
- 9 A. Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie Orientale/avec un recueil d'inscriptions arabes par Jean Sauvaget* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1940), p. 225. See also T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, vol. 3 (London: Pindar Press, 1987), p. 289.
 - 10 Yasser Tabbaa, *The Transformation of Islamic Art during the Sunni Revival* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 144–45.
 - 11 Tabbaa, *Transformation of Islamic Art*, figs. 153–54.
 - 12 See Jean Sauvaget in Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques*, p. 302.
 - 13 Dogan Kuban, *The Miracle of Divrigi* (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Kultur Merkezi, 1997), pp. 146–47.
 - 14 See, for instance, A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1982), pp. 55–158.
 - 15 See Yasser Tabbaa, “Monuments with a Message: Propagation of Jihad under Nur Al-Din (1146–1174),” in *The Meaning of Two Worlds*, ed. Vladimir P. Goss (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp. 223–39.
 - 16 Oleg Grabar, “Two Pieces of Metalwork at the University of Michigan,” *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961), pp. 360–68. See, for instance, an Ayyubid basin in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, in Wafiyah ‘Izzi, “An Ayyubid basin of al-Salih Najm al-Din,” in *Studies in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honour of Professor K.A.C. Creswell* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1965), pp. 253–59.
 - 17 On inscriptions appearing on façades and which constitute, *inter alia*, “The Authentic Voice of Contemporary Propaganda,” see Carole Hillenbrand, “Jihad Propaganda in Syria from the Time of the First Crusade Until the Death of Zengi: The Evidence of Monumental Inscription,” in *Jerusalem*, eds. Halil Athamina and Roger Heacock (Birzeit: Birzeit University’s International Academic Conference, 1992), pp. 60–69; Tabbaa, “Monuments with a Message,” pp. 223–39.
 - 18 See R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols, The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).
 - 19 On occasion, the Zengid dynasty, which ruled the Jazira (1127–1222), also entered the political fray and troubled the Artuqids. See Carole Hillenbrand, “The History of the Jazira, 1100–1250: A Short Introduction,” in Julian Raby, ed., *The Art of Syria and the Jazira, 1100–1250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 10.
 - 20 William F. Spengler and Wayne G. Sayles, *Turkoman Figural Bronze Coins and Their Iconography* (Lodi, Wis.: Clio’s Cabinet, 1992), pp. 119–54, especially pp. 119, 143, and 151. The coins of Artuq Arslan, like those of his brother Yuluq Arslan before him, manifest considerable political significance.
 - 21 Spengler and Sayles, *Turkoman Figural Bronze Coins*, pp. 150–51.
 - 22 Eva Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian interchange from the tenth to twelfth century,” *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001), pp. 17–50.
 - 23 Tütüncü, “About a Candlestick,” pp. 111–18.
 - 24 Sibte ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir’at al-Zaman*, facsimile reproduction of manuscript no. 136 of the Landberg collection of Arabic manuscripts belonging to Yale University, ed. J. R. Jewett (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1907), p. 466, quoted in Rice, “Inlaid Brasses,” p. 284.
 - 25 Yehoshua Frenkel, “Mardin and Jerusalem during the Ayyubid Age,” in *1st International Symposium of Mardin History Papers*, eds. Ibrahim Ozcosar and Huseyin H. Gunes (Istanbul: Artukluar Mardin Valiligi Kultur Yayini, 2006), pp. 549–51.
 - 26 Emanuel Sivan, “The Sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam during the Crusader Period,” in *The History of Jerusalem Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099–1250)*, eds. J. Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Publications, 1991), pp. 287–303 (in Hebrew).
 - 27 Joshua Prawer, “Political History of Crusader and Ayyubid Jerusalem,” in Prawer and Ben-Shammai, eds., *History of Jerusalem Crusaders*, pp. 1–58.
 - 28 Hillenbrand, “History of the Jazira,” pp. 12–15.
 - 29 C. Edmund Bosworth, “Studies on the Jazira II: Dunaysir and its History,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae scientiarum Hung.* 59, no. 1 (2006), pp. 1–10.
 - 30 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Bughyat al-Talab fi Ta’rikh Halab*, vol. 8, ed. S. Zakkar (Damascus: Mutab’ Dar al-Ba’ath, 1408/1988), pp. 3601–602. See also Frenkel, “Mardin and Jerusalem,” p. 550; David Morray, *The Ayyubid Notable and his World, Ibn al-‘Adim and Aleppo as Portrayed in his Biographical Dictionary of People Associated with the City* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 100.
 - 31 Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 151–61.

FIT FOR THE COURT

Ottoman Royal Costumes and Their Tailors, from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century

Abstract

The collection at the Topkapı Palace Museum includes some three thousand items of royal clothing. Most of these belonged to the sultans and their immediate male relatives. According to a tradition that was established after the demise of Mehmed II (reigned 1451–81), clothes were packed and stored in the treasury after an individual's death. While some children's clothing has also survived, very few garments belonging to the women of the royal household were preserved. All royal costumes were made at the palace workshop, which at its height at the end of the sixteenth century employed close to seven hundred tailors. By drawing on extant palace record books and other rich archival materials dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, this paper discusses the structure and organization of the royal tailors' workshop as well as the training of individuals who aspired to join it.

ACCORDING TO OTTOMAN STATE TRADITION, it was customary to keep the clothes of a deceased sultan. This provides the opportunity to track the styles of dress of the Ottoman sultans from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. The collection of approximately three thousand items in the Topkapı Palace Museum largely consists of the clothes of Ottoman sultans, which were considered to be incredibly valuable and hence were kept in the treasury rooms of the palace after a sultan's death. In addition to those of the sultan, the clothes and belongings of members of the dynasty or of high-ranking state officials or religious men were entombed according to tradition. Later, the clothes collected from these tombs were moved to the collection in the Palace Museum.¹ The fact that there are almost seventy kaftans belonging to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent alone² is a good example of the care and protection afforded to the clothes of sultans. This tradition, however, did not extend to the clothes of the women in the palace or of the wives of the sultans.³ Nevertheless, a women's clothing collection (albeit with examples mainly from the nineteenth century) does exist in the Topkapı Palace Museum.

Publications about the clothes of the Ottoman sultans usually relate to the introduction of some samples to the Topkapı Palace and the techniques used in their creation. Thanks to archival records, which were kept in notebook form, once a particular period is identified it is possible to estimate, at the very least, which individual team made a particular sultan's clothes. The names of the tailors or the artists that made the outfits were not woven into the clothes, but a record may occasionally be visible. A kaftan that belonged to Prince Korkud, for example, was marked by a tag as having been made by Iskender the Tailor.⁴ Records on royal tailors revealed that Iskender the Tailor was an important master tailor during the mid-sixteenth century.⁵ In this respect, thanks to the records about the royal clothes-

making departments and the comparison of information, it is possible to identify the names of the people who were working in the royal departments as apprentices or as master tailors, as well as to keep track of their salaries and promotions over a period of several years.

The Ottoman state was one of the leading civilizations of its time with regard to record keeping. The state recorded every important occurrence, and these documents were stored and maintained. Thanks to them, the details of the tailoring departments can be followed for three centuries. The records are in the *siyakat* style of writing and provide the name and dates of the department, the names of individual teams, the people working in the teams, and their wages.

The royal departments of clothes making for the Ottoman Empire are divided into three groups. The first is the royal artists' team known as *ehl-i hiref*; the second is the royal tailors' team called *hayyatın-i hassa*; and the last is the team of *hil'at* tailors.

Records are mostly kept in separate notebooks in the Istanbul Topkapı Museum Archive (TSMA), the Istanbul Basbakanlık Ottoman Archive (BOA), and the Sofia Bulgaria State Archive (BULGAR).⁶ Hundreds of notebooks and documents belonged to royal craftsmen, royal tailors, and *hil'at* tailors. A smaller number of notebooks was used to indicate the assigned numbers of the groups in this work. Although each of these "salary notebooks" documents a period of three months, graphs help present data for the span of a year. Notebooks related to royal craftsmen (*ehl-i hiref*) indicate the dates when the craftsmen met. The archives in which they were found are as follows.

THE DATE WRITTEN IN THE GRAPHS IN THE PLATES	THE ACTUAL DATES IN THE DOCUMENTS	ARCHIVE NUMBERS	ARCHIVE LOCATION
1526	15 January–12 February 1526	D. 9612	TSMA
1545	15 March–11 June 1545	D. 9706/4	TSMA
1557	24 October 1557–12 November 1558	D. 9612	TSMA
1593	5 January–2 April 1593	MAD. 7238	BOA
1595	6 September–3 December 1595	MAD. 7357	BOA
1598	4 August–31 October 1598	MAD. 7362	BOA
1606	6 August–1 October 1606	D. 9613/3	TSMA
1613	21 February–20 May 1613	MAD. 07181	BOA
1619	18 March–13 June 1619	MAD. 6270	BOA
1626	29 March–25 June 1626	MAD. 7444	BOA
1630	10 August–6 November 1630	MAD. 6137	BOA
1647	6 February–5 May 1647	MAD. 05723	BOA

1652	2 December 1652–28 February 1653	MAD. 06300	BOA
1658	6 January–3 April 1658	MAD. 06300	BOA
1662	16 August–12 November 1662	MAD. 7166	BOA
1670	21 May–17 August 1670	MAD. 2308	BOA
1677	7 December 1676–4 March 1677	MAD. 7014	BOA
1686	17 November 1686–9 August 1687	MAD. 6292	BOA
1690	12 January–9 April 1690	MAD. 6292	BOA
1701	8 June 1701–27 May 1702	D. 179	BULGAR
1710	26 August 1710–18 February 1711	D. 200	BULGAR
1732	18 December 1732–7 December 1733	MAD. 204	BOA
1742	29 November 1742–17 November 1743	D. 249	BULGAR
1760	18 February 1760–5 May 1761	Kepeci 7225	BOA
1775	4 March 1775–20 February 1776	Kepeci 7229	BOA
1790	10 September 1790–27 November 1791	Kepeci 7235	BOA
1796	4 October–30 December 1796	D. 9613/13	TSMA

The graph below displays data from notebooks documenting the royal tailors (*hayyatin-i hassa*) and the *hil'at* tailors (*hayyatin-i hil'at*). It indicates the dates when the tailors met and the archives in which the notebooks were found.

THE DATE WRITTEN IN THE GRAPHS IN THE PLATES	THE ACTUAL DATES IN THE DOCUMENTS	ARCHIVE NUMBERS	ARCHIVE LOCATION
1526	15 January–12 February 1526	D. 733	TSMA
1566	1 March–28 September 1566	MAD. 6196	BOA
1592	8 October 1592–4 January 1593	MAD. 7238	BOA
1595	6 September–3 December 1595	MAD. 7357	BOA
1596	1 March–28 September 1596	MAD. 7357	BOA
1599	28 January–26 April 1599	MAD. 7362	BOA
1604	30 May–26 August 1604	MAD. 7312	BOA
1613	21 May–16 August 1613	MAD. 7182	BOA
1618	19 December 1618–17 March 1619	MAD. 6270	BOA
1626	22 September–19 December 1626	MAD. 6299	BOA
1630	10 August–6 November 1630	MAD. 6137	BOA
1647	6 February–5 May 1647	MAD. 5723	BOA
1657	9 October 1657–5 January 1658	MAD. 6300	BOA
1663	9 February–8 May 1663	MAD. 7166	BOA
1670	21 May–17 August 1670	MAD. 2308	BOA

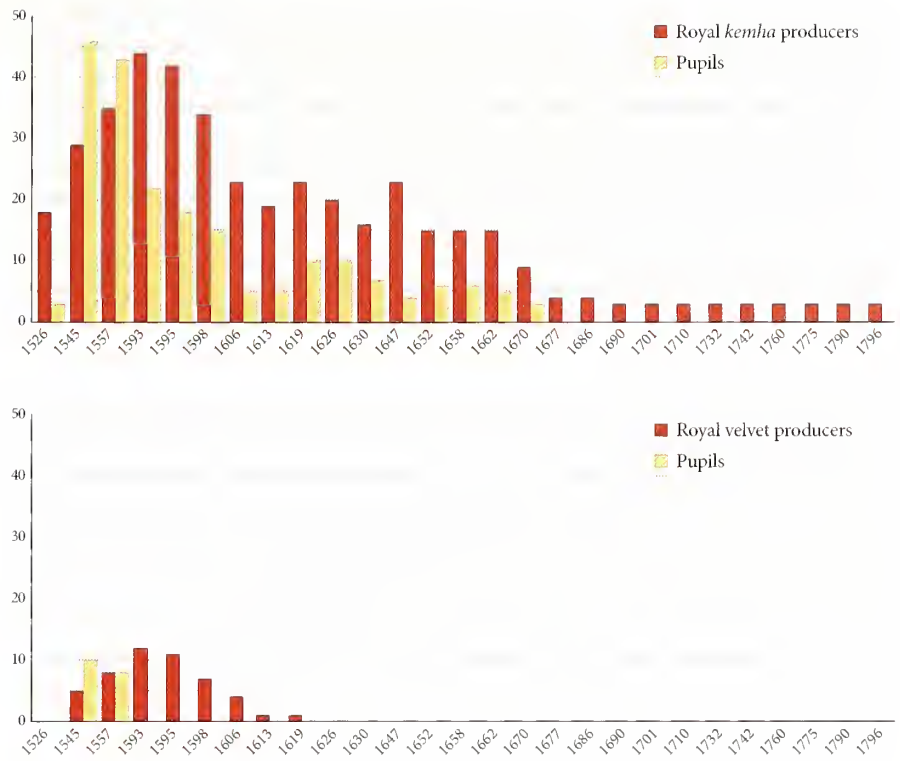
1671	11 February–9 May 1671	MAD. 2308	BOA
1673	18 April–15 July 1673	MAD. 6928	BOA
1675	28 March–18 December 1675	MAD. 7014	BOA
1688	30 July–25 October 1688	MAD. 6292	BOA
1699	29 June 1699–17 June 1700	MAD. 3733	BOA
1700	18 June–14 September 1700	MAD. 3733	BOA
1729	27 July–23 November 1729	MAD. 3735	BOA
1732	18 December 1732–16 March 1733	MAD. 204	BOA
1735	17 November 1735–13 February 1736	MAD. 7479	BOA
1756	26 September–23 December 1756	Kepeci 7224	BOA
1757	15 September–12 December 1757	Kepeci 7225	BOA
1760	13 August–9 November 1760	Kepeci 7226	BOA
1764	1 July–27 September 1764	Kepeci 7227	BOA
1768	18 May–14 August 1768	Kepeci 7228	BOA
1776	21 February–19 May 1776	Kepeci 7230	BOA
1777	9 February–8 May 1777	Kepeci 7231	BOA

Royal Departments for Producing Clothes

The Ottoman government founded official departments for their clothes as well as departments to produce the materials that were needed by the palace. In some sense, a different department was established for each step of royal costume production.

Two important types of raw material—silk and thread—were needed particularly in the production of clothes for the sultans. The Ottoman government founded official departments under the palace administrator for obtaining raw materials to be used in the royal workshops. The first of these was a group called *gazzaz*, which processed silk for use in the royal workshops. Its members belonged to both the royal craftsmen team and the royal tailors team. Clothes shimmering with silver or gold thread attracted the attention of the sultans, and consequently these threads were considered to be an indispensable element in clothes and materials. To meet the need for thread, the team of gilded thread makers was positioned within the *ehl-i hiref* group. The gilded thread makers processed the gold or silver used to construct clothes, while the *kemha* or *zerduz* groups used these threads to decorate clothes.

Clothes and materials were initially woven in the royal workshops according to the patterns designed by the illustrators group in the *ehl-i hiref* team. When those workshops could not meet the demands made on them, clothes were ordered from other workshops in Istanbul and Bursa. Silk clothes in particular were kept under the control of the state and were checked in detail, from the number of threads to the dye.⁷



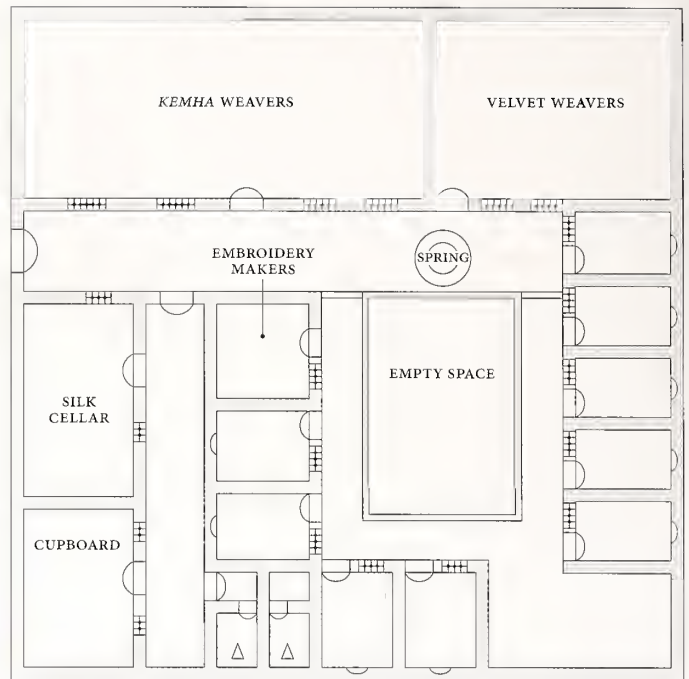
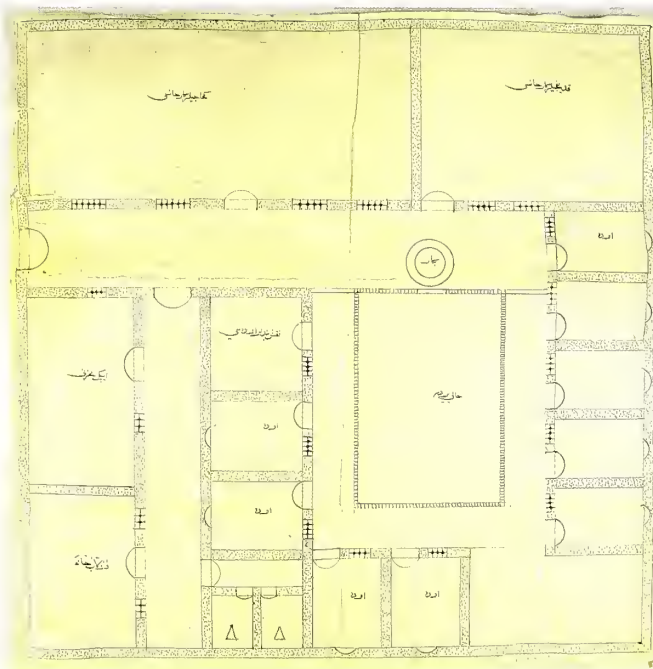
1

The number of royal *kemha* and velvet producers by year.

Other departments produced clothes under the direction of royal craftsmen and tailors. *Kemha*⁸ and velvet producers are the most important of these groups. The *kemha* producers existed from the beginning to the end of the royal craftsmen organization known as *ehl-i hiref*. This group was one of the largest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with the total number of masters, apprentices, and pupils exceeding seventy. By the eighteenth century, however, the number of people working in this group had fallen to three. The other group that produced velvet was neither as crowded nor as enduring as the *kemha* producers, and it did not hire workers after 1622 (fig. 1).

A plan dated 1808 indicates the workplace of both the *kemha* and the velvet producers. The workshop of the *kemha* producers was located in the largest room on the upper right corner of the plan, while that of the velvet producers was on the left. The structure had an open courtyard at the center, a number of small rooms (one of which belonged to the silk processors), and a larger room for storing silk. Additionally, located near the *kemha* and the velvet producers' workshops was a water system that probably included a pool. This workshop building, considered to have belonged to the palace, is thought to have been built in Tavukpazari in Istanbul in the sixteenth century (fig. 2),⁹ but we could not identify any building or ruin around Tavukpazari that fit this plan.

As is known from records dated 1545, a group of embroidery makers worked with the *kemha*. This group, which numbered eleven workers towards the end of the sixteenth century, did not hire anyone after 1635. In addition to the *kemha* and the velvet producers were those who created a kind of coarse woolen cloth called *aba*. Another group, known as *basmacıyân*, produced printed cotton, but it was very short term and employed only a few people.



2

2

Plan indicating the workplace of the *kemha* and velvet weavers in 1808 according to the document registered TSM E. 6342

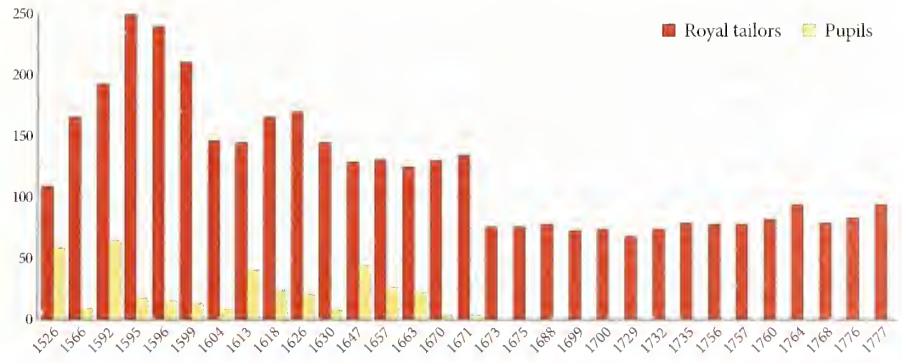
Royal Tailor Units

Royal Tailors

The royal tailors oversaw the sewing needs, along with the clothes, in the palace. It was compulsory for this group to travel with the sultan during wartime.¹⁰ Led by the head tailor, its many integral activities, such as hiring, appointments, and the wages of the staff, were conducted with the approval of the *hazinedarbasi*,¹¹ who was a royal officer responsible for finances.

The number of employees in the royal tailors unit varied over time. Some information about the places where royal tailors used to work is given in various documents, including Evliya Celebi's *Seyahatname*. An Ottoman traveler, Evliya Celebi (1611–1682) mentions two major workshops: one built by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, and the other started by Suleyman the Magnificent. He states that the first workshop was located in Sultanahmet, near Arslanhane; the second was close to where the Gulhane Park lies today, over the outer wall of the Topkapı Palace and opposite the Alay Mansion from where the sultan watched the army march. Celebi also states five hundred people were employed in each workshop.¹² Archival documents dated 1792¹³ and 1840¹⁴ relate the assignment of royal tailors to the mosque foundation, and a document dated 1795 records the assignment of an *İmam* to the mosque in front of the workshop of tailors built by Selim I (reigned 1512–20).¹⁵ That Hassa tailors used to work opposite the Alay Mansion also confirms Evliya Celebi's statement. In that location today are a number of buildings that were constructed later.

The royal tailors' salary notebooks are four to five pages long and list the head tailor, the chamberlain (*kethüda*), the imam, and the muezzin, along with the date and their wages. After this comes a list of administrative staff and four or five departments with staff listed by name. During the seventeenth century, each department contained twenty to thirty workers. These departments were



3
The kaftan of Suleyman the Magnificent (13/37) in the Topkapı Palace Museum; the number of royal tailors by year.

allegedly separated according to their fields of expertise, such as kaftan, shirt, or *shalwar* tailors.

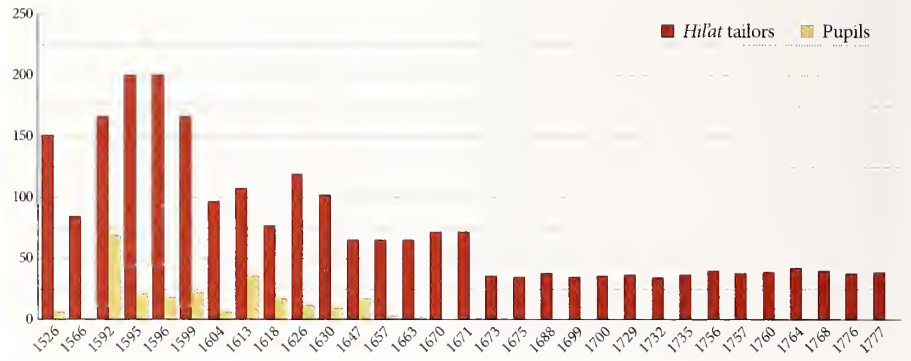
Following this section comes information concerning silk processors (*gazzaz*), cotton fluffers, printed cloth makers, and *edikyan* units, each with one to five workers. The printers added decorations onto clothes, whereas the *edikyan* dealt with the bottom leather parts of the *shalwars*. After these units is information about the *müteferrika* group, made up of about ten people. *Müteferrika* employees appear in other departments as well. A few others were hired, but not necessarily in a unit, to handle detailed works.

Despite the numerous groups and subgroups within the royal tailor unit in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their numbers decreased in the eighteenth century (fig. 3). For instance, the *shakirdan* group, which is listed as being made up of apprentices or pupils in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents, did not appear in the eighteenth-century records. The same is true of the *gazzaz* group, which is mentioned in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents as silk processors, but it had no workers in the eighteenth century.

Hil'at Tailors

The definition of *hil'at*—to take off one's clothes or to give the clothes that one takes off to someone else—could also refer to the valuable clothes that sultans presented to statesmen and other important men to bless and honor them. In Islamic communities, sultans offered belts, swords, furs of squirrels or weasels, and money along with the *hil'at* in accordance with the importance or responsibilities of the statesman.

The *hil'at* tradition dates back to when the Prophet Muhammad gave his robe to Ka'b b. Zuheyr, a famous poet, after he recited an ode.¹⁶ In the Ottoman state, the *hil'at* tradition was attributed great significance, for it symbolized the legitimacy of the dynasty and the subjects' commitment to it. Consequently, the practice was continued even during difficult times. A *hil'at* was also given to a person who received a state mission or who expressed his commitment to the sultan as a way of blessing, encouraging, and honoring him. Such *hil'at* rewards were sometimes included as an allowance from the sultan. The *hil'at* tradition was gradually abolished, beginning in the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (reigned 1808–39).¹⁷



4

4

Hil'at to be given by Murad III to Ja'far Kethuda (from *Şehinşehname*, 1592; TSM B. 200, fol. 112a); the number of *hil'at* tailors by year.

Even though the *hil'at* tailors unit was founded with the royal tailors, the records of this smaller unit follow those of the royal tailors. In *hil'at* notebooks, the name and the salary of the head tailors and the chamberlain were written after the dates that the notebook covered. After these come the *müteferrika* group, which dealt with a variety of activities. About two hundred men were employed in the *hil'at* group in the sixteenth century, but this number diminished gradually to forty in the seventeenth century. The unit that educated apprentices was abolished after 1670 (fig. 4).

Royal Fur Tailors

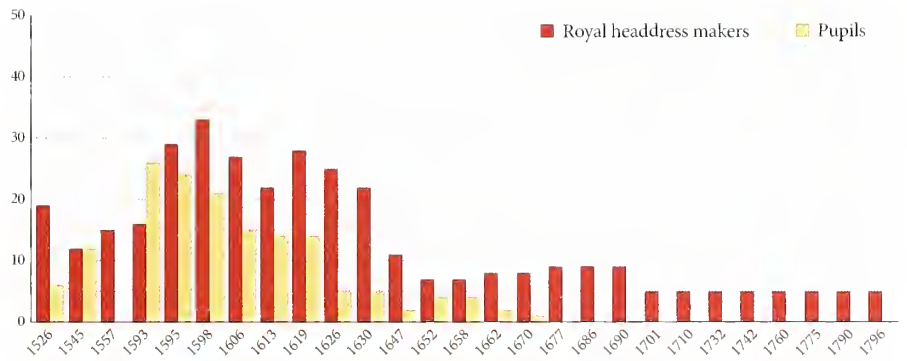
Fur was an important costume element for Ottoman sultans and elderly Turkish men. Even before Mahmud II introduced a costume revolution in 1828, fur overcoats were regarded as a symbol of Ottoman wealth. Every member of the ruling class wore fur befitting his position.¹⁸ This group of tailors was included in *ehl-i hiref*. The fact that the workers in this unit gave presents of fur headdresses and coats lined with fur to the sultan¹⁹ suggests they prepared various clothes decorated with fur. When related samples in Ottoman art are studied, the importance of fur in clothing becomes apparent: some sultans preferred sable while others liked lynx or squirrel. Sometimes fur was imported. A document written to the ruler of Moscow in 1588 mentions three merchants who were sent to Russia for the fur trade.²⁰ *Hassa* fur tailors were one of the groups that produced clothes for the palace, but again, despite the various numbers of workers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they numbered only nineteen in the eighteenth century (fig. 5).

Royal Headdress Makers

Another unit that served the palace for three centuries was that of headdress makers. In Ottoman culture, headdresses were given names, such as *mücevveze*, *selimî*, *kallâvi*, *perîşânî*, *kubâdî*, *kâtibî*, and *âzâmî*, according to their shape. Even though workers in the unit were called *külahdüz* (conical hat makers), it is understood they were able to make any style of headdress, because among the gifts presented to the sultan were various kinds of hats, including *mücevveze*, night caps, and



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Portrait of Selim III (r. 1789–1807) with his fur, from the Topkapı Palace Museum (17/30); the number of royal fur tailors by year.

6

A turban from the Topkapı Palace Museum (13/2116); the number of royal headdress makers by year.

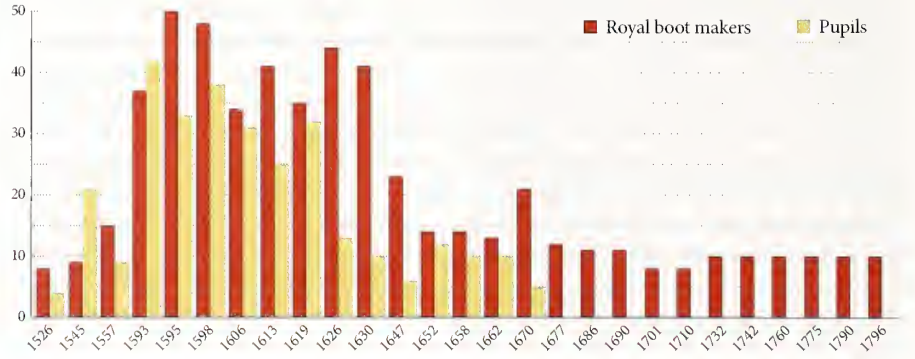
arakiye.²¹ Again, the number of headdress makers diminished from about fifty to only five people by the eighteenth century (fig. 6).

One of the indispensable elements of a sultan's turban is a *sorguc*, a decoration made of black or white feathers, tern feathers, and precious jewels that was worn at the front of the turban and similar headdresses. The Ottomans reserved another unit to make these decorations, and this group lasted for three centuries.

Royal Boot Makers

This unit made any kind of footwear for the sultan in the sixteenth century, including shoes, slippers, thick boots, and light thin-soled boots.²² Since the most important raw material for footwear is leather, a tannery was founded to serve the palace and royal leather workers employed there. Leathers used to make shoes and boots were primarily produced in the royal tannery. Similar to the other groups of tailors, the number of workers in this unit was large during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but it decreased significantly in the eighteenth century (fig. 7).

Leather wears out quickly when it is used for the soles of shoes or boots. To prevent this wear, a metal material called *nalca* was inserted under the leather layer.



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Boots from the Topkapı Palace Museum (2/4447); the number of royal boot makers by year.

Making *nalca*, which was an integral part of shoe production, constituted another branch of crafts in the Ottoman Empire. A royal *nalca*-making unit was founded in the seventeenth century and employed two workers.

Conclusion

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, units of tailors paid more attention to hiring young people than they did to employing masters of trades. In each unit, tailors were trained according to a sort of master-apprentice relationship, and with only a few exceptions, almost all of the units had a subgroup of pupils or apprentices. The group of apprentices called *shakirdan* is the best example of this. In the eighteenth century, after the practice of training pupils or apprentices had been abolished in 1671, workers remained in their units for forty to fifty years. One example of retaining staff from a young age is Halil veled-i Süleyman, who started working at the royal fur tailors unit in 1732 with a wage of two *akces* (silver coins) per day. Decades later he became the head fur tailor in 1773 with a wage of eight *akces* per day. Later his wage rose to eleven *akces* per day, and he finally left the unit in 1785. The fact that Halil veled-i Süleyman spent fifty-two years of his life working in the unit indicates he must have been quite young when he was first hired.

Hazinedarbaşı, the head of treasure in the palace, was responsible for all the units. According to documents, the approval of the *Hazinedarbaşı* was required for any appointments or promotions as well as for all processes regarding the workers. It was also the responsibility of the *Hazinedarbaşı* to keep track of the *hilat* that were kept as part of the Birün Treasure located near Kubbealtı.

Judging from documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, workers evidently came from different locations, such as the Balkans. (Record keepers at that time noted each worker's city of origin and not his father's name.) This suggests some young men were recruited to certain units for their significant artistic ability. In the eighteenth century, almost all the workers' paternal names were Muslim, an indication that after this point few if any artists were engaged from distant lands.

When the clothes of the Ottoman sultans from the beginning of the nineteenth century are examined, a style that became classic appears. Sultans wore turbans

with *sorguç* decorations; *shalwar* were worn underneath a kaftan. Some aspects of the style changed over the decades, with variations in the form or decoration of *sorguç*, turbans, kaftans, and *shalwar*, but in general sultans enjoyed this way of dressing, and it became a symbol of imperial authority. The pace of stylistic change increased significantly in the early nineteenth century during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, when clothing began to look more European in fashion. Perhaps coincidentally, records about the royal tailor units ceased about this same time. Traditional ways of dressing that had lasted for three centuries came to an end. This transition in costume was a complex and extended process that is outside the bounds of this paper.

The costumes of sultans, which are in the Topkapı Palace today, demonstrate the remarkable quality of clothing, design, embroidery, and decoration that was afforded to garments in centuries past. Teamwork must have been indispensable in creating such high-quality clothing. The fact that records remain which continually track the tailor units over three centuries indicates the importance that the imperial family and the palace staff attributed to tailoring and to clothing. Through archival documents, we can follow those who made clothes and worked in various departments, and we can track their salaries and promotions throughout the years. Yet, despite the hundreds of notebooks in the archives, little information remains about the quantity of clothing produced in each workshop, and we do not know who, beyond the sultan and his sons, wore the clothes created by the royal tailors. Through the Topkapı Museum collection, however, we are able to determine the tailoring and style of clothing produced in each era.

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NOTES

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- 1 The best examples are kaftans found during the cleaning of the Prince Tombs in the Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya) Museum in May 2010. When other clothes were removed from chests, some historical kaftans that had been hitherto undiscovered were found with other valuable items.
- 2 Fikret Altay, *Kaftanlar* (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Bankası Yayınları, 1979), pp. 4–6; Macide Gönül, “Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi’nde Bulunan Padişah. Kaftanları,” *Türk Etnografya Dergisi* 10 (1968), pp. 59–66.
- 3 Altay, *Kaftanlar*, p. 6.
- 4 Hülya Tezcan, *Sarayın Terzisi: M. Palma-D. Lena-P. Parma* (Istanbul, 2008), p. 25.
- 5 TSMA, D. 733; BOA, MAD 6196.
- 6 Some sections of the documents written in Istanbul concerning the Ottoman Empire were sold to Bulgaria in 1931. Recently, microfilms or copies of these documents in Bulgaria were brought to Istanbul by the Ottoman Archives of Primeministership. Necati Aktaş et al., *Basbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (Istanbul, 2000), p. 441.
- 7 Hülya Tezcan, “Saray Nakkaşhanesinin Erken Resim Programına Gore hazırlanmış Türk Kumaş ve İşlemeleri,” 9. *Milletlerarası Türk Sanatları Kongresi Bildiriler III* (Ankara, 1995), p. 322; Altay, *Kaftanlar*, pp. 3–4.
- 8 *Kemha* was a stiff material woven with a silk warp and using silver or gold thread to create patterns. It was usually used in making kaftans. The type of cloth with a silk warp and a gold collar with silver or gold thread was called *seraser*. *Kemha* clothes with a width of 65 cm had 6,700 to 8,150 warps. For detailed information about *kemha*, see Emre Dölen, *Tekstil Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1992), pp. 547, 549; Metin Sözen, *Geleneksel Türk El Sanatları* (Istanbul, 1998), p. 192; Nevber Gürsu, *Türk Dokumacılık Sanatı Çağlar Boyu Desenler* (Istanbul, 1988), p. 24.
- 9 Tahsin Öz, *Türk Kumaş ve Kadifeleri XIV–XVI. Yüzyıl* (Istanbul, 1946), pp. 45–46; Tezcan, “Saray Nakkaşhanesinin Erken Resim Programına Gore hazırlanmış Türk Kumaş ve İşlemeleri,” p. 322.
- 10 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara, 1984), pp. 461–62.
- 11 BOA, AE, SMST. II, 21/2011.
- 12 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi: 1. Kitap*, transcription by Yücel Dağlı-Seyit Ali Kahraman (Istanbul, 2006), p. 318.
- 13 BOA, Cevdet Evkaf, 414-20957.
- 14 BOA, Cevdet Evkaf, 50-2461.
- 15 BOA, Cevdet Evkaf, 634-31963.
- 16 Mehmet Şeker, “Hil’at,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18 (Istanbul, 1998), p. 23; Ahmet Savran, “Ka’b b. Zuheyr,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 24 (Istanbul, 2001), p. 7.
- 17 For detailed information about *hil’at*, see Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiat Tahlil ve Metin (1066–1116/1656–1704)*, (Ankara, 1995); Filiz Karaca, “Osmanlılarda Hil’at,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18 (Istanbul, 1998), pp. 25–27; Şeker, “Hil’at,” pp. 22–25; M. Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol. 3 (Istanbul, 1983), pp. 833–34.
- 18 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü* (Istanbul, 1969), p. 165.
- 19 Rıfık Melül Meriç, “Bayramlarda Padişahlara Hediye Edilen Sanat Eserleri

ve Karşılıkları,” *Türk Sanatı Tarihi Araştırma ve incelemeleri I* (İstanbul, 1963), pp. 766–71.

- 20 Ahmet Refik, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayatı* (Ankara, 1987), p. 21.
- 21 Meriç, “Bayramlarda Padişahlara Hediye,” pp. 766–71.
- 22 Meriç, “Bayramlarda Padişahlara Hediye,” pp. 766–71.



A MEDITERRANEANIST'S COLLECTION

Henri Pharaon's "Treasure House of Arab Art"

Abstract

Henri Pharaon's mansion in Beirut is a unique artifact among Lebanese urban elite establishments. Built in the late nineteenth century, it houses one of Lebanon's most significant collections of art objects displayed in an extraordinary setting of authentic Ottoman interiors dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Conceived by Henri Pharaon during the formative years of the Lebanese nation state (1929–63), the house amalgamates objects from the region's multilayered cultures and religions. This paper proceeds from the idea of a house as an extension of self and explores the personal drives, nationalist aspirations, and cultural constructs that may have shaped the making of the Pharaon mansion.

HENRI PHARAON'S LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY MANSION, located in a historic quarter of Beirut, houses one of the most significant collections of art objects in Lebanon (fig. 1).¹ Screened by high walls and tall cypress trees, the beautiful garden and house conceal a lifetime of connoisseurship and acquisition. The collection conveys the historical layering of the region, from the Phoenician to the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic periods. Most striking is the collection's extraordinary setting. The house holds the largest assemblage of authentic Ottoman interiors—lacquered and painted wood panels and ceilings, marble and stone carving—assembled from demolished Damascene and Aleppine houses dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. These interiors have been studied and published in a catalogue by Dorothea Duda,² whereas only a selection of the most outstanding pieces was recently featured in a catalogue commissioned by the new owner of the mansion, Robert Mouawad, a renowned jeweler who transformed the house into a private museum that carries his name.³

This study is a preliminary exploration into the making of the house and the drive, ideas, aspirations, and affectations that may have guided the selection of the objects and shaped their display setting. The collector Henri Pharaon (1898–1993) was a man of great wealth and political clout who contributed to the shaping of the Lebanese nation state during the French Mandate period (1920–43) and after Lebanon's independence in 1943 (fig. 2).⁴ His wealth and hospitality were proverbial, and his opulent house, which acquired a wondrous reputation, became the embodiment of Lebanese refinement and high culture. Conceived in the crucible of Lebanese nation building, the house stands as a significant witness to Lebanon's modern history.

Henri Pharaon belonged to a prominent Greek Catholic family that traces its origin to the region of Hawran in Syria.⁵ After moving to Damascus in the seventeenth century, many members of the family, along with other coreligionists,

¹ View of the former Pharaon Mansion (today the private Mouawad Museum), Beirut, Lebanon. Photo by the author.



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Henri Pharaon in front of his mansion. Courtesy arabianEye.

relocated to several Ottoman and European cities, such as Haifa, Cairo, Alexandria, Venice, Trieste, and Paris.⁶ In addition to being entrepreneurial and business-oriented, the family was cosmopolitan, speaking French and easily moving back and forth among Europe, Egypt, and Lebanon. It built its wealth in the silk and textile trade with Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷ This was further consolidated with the establishment of the first private bank in Beirut, in partnership with the Chiha family, with whom the Pharaons had close alliances through marriage.⁸

Born in 1898 in Alexandria in his grandfather's house, Pharaon moved with his parents to Beirut in 1900. He was educated in French missionary schools there before he left for Switzerland during World War I. He then joined the faculty of law at the University of Lyons, a choice determined by the strong commercial, financial, and cultural ties that existed between the weaving industry of Lyons and the bourgeois Christian milieu of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.⁹ Upon the death of his father in 1922, Henri Pharaon returned to Beirut to assume the presidency of the family bank.

During the late Ottoman period, Beirut had emerged as a provincial capital, a major entrepôt on the Mediterranean and the gateway to the Syrian interior. Its port and a vast network of trans-Mediterranean exchanges with Europe were the main vectors of its transformation.¹⁰ Beirut's highly effective and powerful mercantile class was connected to all the major centers of the Ottoman Empire and to other European cities. It prospered by means of its wide-ranging financial activities, its banks, and its credit and real-estate investments, which significantly distinguished it from the traditional class of notables.¹¹

In 1920 the establishment of the French Mandate in the former Ottoman provinces created the new political entity of Greater Lebanon. It was composed of the Christian Mount Lebanon to which were annexed territories parceled out from the former provinces of Damascus and Beirut. The French created an entity that ensured the numerical supremacy and guaranteed the political privilege of one confessional group, namely, the Christian Maronites of Mount Lebanon. This was done to the detriment of local Muslims and Druzes, who felt coerced into joining this invented nation. A nationalist narrative, advocated by Christian intellectuals, traced the historical presence of Lebanon to ancient Phoenicia and underplayed the Arab and Islamic past, placing the nation's historical and geographical boundaries exclusively within a Mediterranean culture.¹² The dichotomy that resulted between Muslim and Christian, and conflicts over Lebanon's national identity, became sources of discord in the checkered history of that nation.

Upon his return to Beirut, Henri Pharaon immediately entered the political fray and remained an important power broker, and a behind-the-scenes influential

presence, until the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975.¹³ His extraordinary wealth, vested in banking, major real estate holdings, horse racing, and a monopoly over the management of the port of Beirut, gave him the freedom and autonomy to support the political causes that served his personal and business interests. It is the mansion and the exceptional collection of antique objects collected within its walls, however, that best defined his public image.

The house was built in 1901 by Philippe Pharaon, Henri Pharaon's father, a prominent banker and businessman, and was located in the neighborhood of Zuqaq al-Blat (the Paved Road) that developed outside the walls of Old Beirut.¹⁴ There, many aristocratic families and members of the mercantile bourgeoisie built houses surrounded by gardens and overlooking the scenic bay of Beirut. It combined a central hall plan—a type common in the residential architecture of the region—along with an Italianate neo-Gothic exterior that agreed with the architectural eclecticism dominant in turn-of-the-century Beirut.¹⁵ The style of the house replicated architectural fashion popular in coastal cities around the Mediterranean, and it profiled the Pharaon family's connections to a European and cosmopolitan world. Marble floors and unadorned walls painted in a light green color formed the original décor.¹⁶ Pillaged during World War I—which the Pharaon family waited out in Alexandria—the house was briefly used as a residence for the French governor in 1924.¹⁷ Five years later, in 1929, Henri Pharaon began to restore and refurbish his house.

Pharaon originally intended to incorporate one "Arab Salon" (*salon arabe*) into his mansion, following an established fashion in Lebanese elite houses. The vogue of the Arab Salon had originated in nineteenth-century European interiors, where they were designated as "smoking rooms." These were found in many aristocratic residences and summer homes not only in France, England, and the United States but also in Cairo, where they became integral to the bourgeois house.¹⁸ The passion of many French and British collectors for Middle Eastern objects is well known.¹⁹ In France, in particular, many collectors were engaged in assembling large holdings of such artifacts around the turn of the century. Some of the most elaborate reconstructions were done in Cairo, such as the Hôtel Saint-Maurice, which was built from an expert assemblage of authentic fragments and copies to recreate an imposing mansion.²⁰ In Beirut, General Henri Gouraud, who served as France's High Commissioner from 1919 to 1923, added an Arab Salon to the French official residence,²¹ and there is no doubt that the Lebanese aristocratic classes adopted this fashion by way of French Orientalism.

By his own account, two factors spurred Pharaon's passion for collecting architectural interiors. His travels to Syria, in search of the purebred Arabian horses that he raised, took him into the homes of Damascene and Aleppine notables, where he



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3
View of the garden.



4

4
Anthropomorphic Phoenician sarcophagus from the fifth century BCE in front of the main entrance, with a view toward the Mediterranean.

was impressed by the intricacies of the decoration and the marble floors. Pharaon's visit to the Azem Palace in 1929 furthered his infatuation with Syrian interiors. Built by As'ad Pasha, governor of Damascus in the mid-eighteenth century, the Azem Palace was acquired by the French government in 1922, and it became the location of the French Institute of Archaeology and Islamic Art as well as the residence of the High Commissioner.²² During an attack by rebels in the 1925 insurrection, part of the palace was burned down and its collection pillaged.

Restored by the French, the Azem Palace functioned as a catalyst for Pharaon's imaginative recasting of his father's European-inspired mansion in Zuqaq al-Blat, and it mediated his interest in Bilad al-Sham's historical visual culture. Although the Pharaon family originally came from Syria, Henri Pharaon's multiple displacements among Cairo, Beirut, Switzerland, and France established a physical as well as a cultural distance from what he knew to be part of his family history. The splendid and seductive Damascene and Aleppine interiors came as a revelation to Pharaon. If Aleppine and Damascene houses spurred the aesthetic appreciation and covetousness of Pharaon, the Azem Palace in Damascus provided the total vision. His goal became to surpass the Azem Palace in splendor and riches, and he often boasted later in life that he owned the best palace in the region.

Ironically, the order by the French to bomb Damascus in 1925 in an effort to quell the insurrection resulted in the destruction of a significant number of old houses, which infused the antiquity market with discarded interiors and architectural fragments. Helped by old craftsmen, Pharaon collected ceilings, wainscoting, crumbling walls, tile pavements, mural revetments, isolated cornices, fragments of fireplaces, and fountains, which were photographed in situ, numbered, and transported overland with great care to storage areas.²³ The architectural elements were restored in ateliers and incorporated into various rooms of the house. Old techniques were revived as a way to refurbish the painted woodwork, and disused marble quarries were rediscovered in order to complete the marble mosaics. The cost of



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Plan of the ground floor. From *The Future of the Past* (Beirut: Robert Mouawad Private Museum, 2004).

restoring and refitting the various elements in the mansion was far greater than all the previous costs incurred by their purchase and transportation.

Concomitantly, Pharaon collected objects from throughout the region. Many of them found their way to his doorstep by way of antiquarians who knew of his acquisitiveness. This resulted in the accumulation of large quantities of objects that belonged to the diverse material culture of the region: carved stone capitals, ceramics, metalwork, glass, carpets, vases, sarcophagi, statues, manuscripts, and icons. Archaeologists at the French Institute of Archaeology in Beirut provided the expertise and the scholarship that bolstered the drive to acquire works of art which Pharaon and other Lebanese collectors shared.²⁴ Pharaon displayed many of these objects—Phoenician and Byzantine statues as well as architectural fragments of Syrian provenance—in his walled garden, amidst fountains, lawns, and flower beds. Stone capitals lining the garden alleys present dizzying variations on the acanthus leaf motif, dating from the Roman to the early Islamic period (fig. 3). An enigmatic Phoenician anthropomorphic sarcophagus dating to the fifth century BCE and found in Sidon marks the axis of the main entrance door and signals the primacy of Phoenicia (fig. 4).

To renovate his house, Pharaon engaged Lucien Cavro (1905–1973), a French architect and a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts de Lille, who was participating in the restoration of the Azem Palace, the mosaics of the Umayyad mosque of Damascus, and other archaeological digs in Syria.²⁵ The house's main entrance leads to a central space around which are organized many reception rooms and a



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View of the salon facing the main entrance (G12 and G13 on the floor plan).

grand dining room (fig. 5). Between 1929 and 1963 fourteen reception rooms were recreated inside the mansion from fragments collected through assiduous searches in the old palaces of Damascus and Aleppo. Based on Cavo's account, which was published in the pamphlet *Portrait d'une Maison* that included essays written by friends of Pharaon, the major receptions rooms were refitted with wood ceilings, paneling, wall incrustation, and marble floors from 1929 to 1932 (fig. 6). Work proceeded slowly. The dining room was finished in 1957–58, and the rooms of the upper floor were not completed until 1963.²⁶ Pharaon was constantly working on his house, and the death of Lucien Cavo in 1973, a loss Pharaon felt deeply, probably put a halt to his restoration mania.

The eclectic yet harmonious combination of disparate decorative elements and the careful blending of styles can best be admired in the dining room, a stately and light-filled room that frames the elongated and simple dining table at its center (fig. 7). In the absence of a traditional Ottoman house to emulate, the dining room reveals a blending of styles and objects that was not present in the central salons, which had been restored earlier. The wooden ceiling with geometric patterns came from an Aleppo house, while the carved and painted marble panels that carry Arabic religious inscriptions and are offset by smaller Dutch tiles painted in shades of cobalt blue display the same motif of vases holding bouquets of flowers. Inside the tympanum of the entrance stone arch,²⁷ a desacralized iconostasis is framed on either side by marble panels with floral motifs and Arabic religious inscriptions (fig. 8). Furthermore, two bronze lion heads were inserted on either side of the arcades.



7

View of the dining room (G10, G11, and G9 on the floor plan).



8

Dining room, with a view of the iconostasis above the door.

Unlike museums, which are constrained by specific organizing principles and taxonomies, private holdings are defined by the collector's imagination and are perceived as the extension of self. In her insightful book on collections and souvenirs, Susan Stewart highlights important aspects of the act of acquiring works: "Whereas the souvenir's role or purpose is the remembering or the invention of memory, the point of collecting is forgetting, or starting again, in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie."²⁸ This evocation of an infinite reverie finds expression in the many essays included in the pamphlet *Portrait d'une Maison*.²⁹ For French archaeologist Maurice Dunand and others, Pharaon's house epitomizes the enchantment of a Palace of the Orient, with its opulence and splendor. It preserves past traditions that were being effaced by modernity. The mansion is an oasis of calm and beauty, a world of the imagination where the accumulation of the riches of the Orient provokes feelings of wonder and rapture. The juxtaposition of objects, the thick layering of Turkish and Persian carpets muffling the sound of footsteps, the Dutch tiles from Delft, and the delicate decoration of the wood panels create a sheltered world of harmony and order.

Much of this leads us to think Henri Pharaon was staging his own imaginary Orient while he was rejecting the noisy, messy, modern world that was developing right outside his garden enclosure. A more subtle reading is suggested, however, in a concluding paragraph by Camille Aboussouan, a bibliophile, collector, and like Henri Pharaon, an eminent member of the Lebanese Christian elite.

A house is the reflection of the moral and intellectual order of a man. It is the country of his spontaneous creation, the motherland of his intelligence. When a seemingly austere aesthetic order enlivens with water jets and colors, with flowers and drawings, the interior frame of a daily life, when this order brings Arab and Lebanese art together with remembrances (souvenirs) of the magnificence of Phoenicia, of Greece, and of Byzantium, it

testifies in an admirable way to Humanism, to this Civilization of Thought and Art that is every man's honor, and without which Lebanon cannot conceive itself.³⁰

Pharaon did not wish to write his memoirs, nor did he leave much writing behind; an archive of his personal papers has yet to surface. He did, however, give many interviews late in his life. He spoke about his house and the desires and wishes he invested in it. In an interview given in 1985, he commented, "I wanted to make of this place a house for the brotherly co-existence among religious sects/confessions (*tawa'if*). Thus you see Quranic verses, crosses, icons and Islamic manuscripts all gathered together. I wanted to make this house—my first homeland—what we wanted to make of Lebanon."³¹ This vision, he elaborated, was shaped by his experience as a student in Lausanne, Switzerland, where he witnessed peaceful coexistence among different nationalities (French, German, and Italian) and religious denominations. This idea of Lebanon as the Switzerland of the East, which had wide currency among Lebanese intellectuals, was often repeated but not thoroughly examined.

The house, conceived by Henri Pharaon as an amalgam of many cultures and religions, is the visual expression of a "Mediterraneanist ideology" expounded by Michel Chiha (1891–1954), Pharaon's brother-in-law and business associate, and the attitude was shared by many other Lebanese intellectuals in their circle. Chiha, a successful businessman as well as a political thinker, was instrumental in drafting the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 that was commissioned by the French Mandate authority.³² He is held responsible for the confessional system of government that established a power-sharing arrangement among the different religious groups.³³ In a series of books and articles, Chiha articulated a nationalist ideology that advocated Lebanon's Mediterranean identity, which goes back to Phoenician times. He argued they were neither Phoenician nor Arab but simply Lebanese, a people of distinct characteristics comprising a mixture of ethnic and religious communities tied together by a common history and geographical location.³⁴ This approach embodied Henri Pharaon's strong belief that Lebanon is an entity with historical depth. It was not an artificial construct made possible by historical conjecture, mediated by French colonial power, and shaped by the Christian minority's interests in a predominantly Arab Muslim milieu.

Henri Pharaon's mansion was never set up as a private museum in his lifetime, but it was visited and admired by prominent foreign visitors, kings, rulers, and government officials who left enthusiastic comments in a golden book that Pharaon treasured. With the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975—and the fracturing of the nation—the house was caught in a no-man's-land between the two warring

sides of the city. Miraculously, it survived looting and destruction, which was probably achieved at great expense by paying off the various warring factions. Following the tragic assassination of Pharaon in 1993, the house was sold by his only surviving son to Robert Mouawad, who transformed it into a private museum where the house's staggering riches could be seen by the public.

With its European exterior and Ottoman interiors, the house's hybridity defies categorization and often puzzles its visitors. Without Pharaon, whose consuming passion, single-mindedness, and imagination animated its spaces, the house stands as a relic of a not-so-distant past, in a country where questions of national identity and belonging remain unresolved, contested, and mercurial.

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NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank Nayla de Freige and Laure Hosri for their help and suggestions while researching this paper.
- 2 Dorothea Duda, *Innerarchitektur syrischer Stadthäuser des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts: die Sammlung Henri Pharaon in Beirut* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 1971). Dorothea Duda, "Painted and Lacquered Woodwork in Arab Houses of Damascus and Aleppo," in *Lacquerwork in Asia and Beyond*, ed. William Watson (London: University of London, Percival Foundation of Chinese Art, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1982).
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- 5 For a history of the Pharaon family, see Père Constantin Pacha, *Les Pharaon. Monographie d'une grande famille et ses branches* (Araya, Lebanon: Imprimerie Catholique, 1995).
- 6 One member, Antoun Kassis Pharaon, was the customs master in Egypt during the middle of the eighteenth century. He settled in Europe after 1784.
- 7 Boutros Labaki, *Introduction à l'histoire économique du Liban. Soie et commerce extérieur en fin de période ottomane (1840–1914)* (Beirut: Université Libanaise, 1984). See also Michel Seurat, "Le rôle de Lyon dans l'installation du Mandat Français en Syrie. Intérêts économiques du Liban," in *L'Etat de Barbarie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989).
- 8 Michel Chiha, a business associate at the Bank Pharaon and Chiha (established in 1876) and an important political thinker and intellectual, married Henri Pharaon's only sister, Marguerite, in 1926.
- 9 The city's university, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, oversaw the establishment of the Ecole Française de Droit de Beyrouth in 1913. See Jacques Thobie, *Les Intérêts culturels français dans l'Empire ottoman finissant* (Paris: Louvain, 2008), chapter 6.
- 10 For the history of Beirut, see Samir Kassir, *Histoire de Beyrouth* (Fayard, 2003); Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); May Davie, *Beyrouth et ses faubourgs* (Beirut: CERMOC, 2006).
- 11 Davie, *Beyrouth et ses faubourgs*, pp. 39–56.
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23 “La belle demeure de M. Henri Pharaon à Beyrouth,” *Panorama du Monde* 9 (1965), pp. 52–55.

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26 Lucien Cavro, “L’art arabe dans la demeure de M. Henri Pharaon a Beyrouth,” in *Portrait d’une maison*. He provides a chronology for restoring the main reception rooms on the ground floor. A photographic survey of all these rooms is included in Duda, *Innerarchitektur syrischer Stadthäuser*.

27 The carved stone arch, the fireplace, and the marble panels came from the Qa’a of the house of Muhammad Basha al-Azam, dated to the late eighteenth century, and were purchased by Henri Pharaon. See Stefan Weber, *Damascus. Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918)* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2009), pp. 262–63.

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29 Société Latine de Bienfaisance, *Portrait d’une maison*.

30 *Portrait d’une maison*, last page.

31 Linda Njaym, “Henri Fir’aun. Umniati an yabqa manzili mathafan,” *al-Sayad* 26, no. 2 (1985).

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33 Kais Firro, *Inventing Lebanon: Nationalism and the State under the Mandate* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 34.

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ON THE CROSSROADS

Objects from the Islamic World in Habsburg Collections in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries

Abstract

Vienna's public museums house about 40,000 objects from all over the Islamic world. Of a heterogeneous quality, the works range in date from early Islamic times up to the twentieth century. Contributing to this were the Habsburgs, who assembled art collections that were an essential part of their self-image. Objects from the Islamic world were part of their collections from a very early date. This study focuses on the Habsburg collecting policies of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It also demonstrates the role of Islamic art within their complex system of collection and display. The objects' reception and use are examined during a period that represents the crossroads between the Middle Ages and the early modern period.¹

THE VAST MUSEUM COLLECTIONS of modern-day Vienna originated in the holdings of the Habsburgs, the former ruling dynasty, and date back to the Middle Ages, permeating all layers of the history of collecting. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries collecting by the imperial courts reached an apex. This period witnessed a process of reorganizing the traditional medieval treasury and integrating many novel items from all over the known world, which required the new arrivals to be adapted into traditional classification and organizational systems. Collections were not only refined over the following centuries, but they were also used to promote the development of research and science, ultimately resulting in the creation of Vienna's great museums during the nineteenth century.²

During the time period in question the Habsburg dynasty ruled over large parts of eastern and central Europe (Austrian Habsburgs), Spain (from 1516), and Portugal (from 1580), including their overseas possessions in Asia and the Americas (Spanish Habsburgs). Given the expansion of these dominions, a broader conception of the world developed. The Islamic world, for example, became more accessible to the Habsburgs. The Ottomans and the Habsburgs were neighbors in the Mediterranean and on the Balkans for about four hundred years, and during that time period they were both enemies and allies. Contacts with the Safavid and Mughal empires intensified, and the Austrian Habsburg court and the Spanish Habsburg court sent out or received embassies from Iran and India.³

In addition, the commercial routes by land and by sea never ceased to be busy. In the sixteenth century the most relevant cities of commercial exchange between Europe and Asia continued to be Istanbul, Alexandria, and Venice. Portugal opened a direct sea route to India in the late fifteenth century that enabled direct trade with the South Asian seas. Moreover, military encounters delivered booty, and diplomatic missions brought gifts.⁴ Diplomats and specialized merchants were important agents of exchange who procured desired goods directly from Venice, Istanbul,

¹ Ottoman crown of Stephan Bocskay; Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1605; gold, precious stones, pearls, wood, silk; 23.2 cm x 18.8–22 cm; Inv. SK WS XIV 25. Wooden case lined with Safavid silk; Iran, late 16th century; wood, silk; Inv SK WS XIV 184, Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna.

or even Goa.⁵ Karl V (1500–1558) ordered carpets from a Habsburg agent in Istanbul.⁶ Ogier de Busbeck, the imperial ambassador at the Sublime Porte from 1554 to 1558, collected items for Maximilian II (1527–1576) in Istanbul and received gifts from the sultan.⁷ Valuable Ottoman silk kaftans still existed in nineteenth-century Vienna in the military history museum (originally the imperial armory) and initially may have been diplomatic gifts.⁸ Unfortunately they did not survive the hazards of the World Wars. Gifts were presented to Emperor Maximilian II not only by the sultan but also by the pasha of Buda. For instance, in 1567 the pasha sent him “six beautiful horses [surely sumptuously harnessed], some sabres, bows and arrows and an offer of friendship.”⁹ Through the Habsburg network of inter-family gift giving, many documented items from the East Indies (then still perceived as a vast area geographically) arrived via Lisbon and Madrid.¹⁰

Historic circumstances are mirrored by the many objects originating from the Islamic world that were part of the Habsburg collections. The following study illustrates the varied nature of works from the Islamic world present in the imperial collections during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It also sheds light on the multilayered system and strategies of collecting into which the objects were integrated. In addition, it explores the different spaces of collecting and shows that works from the Islamic world were an integral part of the conceptual programs that particular members of the Habsburg family sought to create for their own collections. Sometimes within a few square meters traditional and novel concepts met within the collections of the extended family, and objects from the Islamic world were placed on the boundary between inexplicable wonder and rational science, that is, between the secular and the sacred.

The medieval Habsburg treasury formed the basis of collecting and continued to house the most important objects of the dynasty, such as valuable regalia, vestments, and relics that justified the emperor’s right to earthly rule.¹¹ This traditional nucleus was maintained and enlarged during the sixteenth century. One highly political item from the Islamic world was added to the treasury in the early seventeenth century and is closely related to the conflict with the Ottomans: the Bocskay crown and its case (fig. 1). The golden crown, which recalls European models, is of Ottoman production and was made in Istanbul’s court workshops shortly before 1605. Its wooden case is covered on the outside and inside with a valuable, signed Safavid silk from the time of Shah ‘Abbas. Its history reflects that of Hungary and the Balkan principalities in their oscillation between Catholicism and Protestantism and between the Habsburg and the Ottoman sphere of influence.

Revolting against the contemporary Counter-Reformation-oriented Habsburgs, Stephan Bocskay (1557–1606), the reformed grand prince of Transylvania, turned to Sultan Ahmed I for allegiance. In 1605 the sultan sent him this crown as

a confirmation of his Ottoman fiefs in Hungary and Transylvania. This meaningful gift was a sign of recognition of his power and at the same time a sign of his association with the Ottoman Empire. Bosckay refused the crown as regalia, knowing that the holy crown of Hungary was in the hands of the Habsburgs. Nonetheless, it represented the sultan's power over these dominions, which he intended to bestow upon one of his subjects. The peace treaty of 1606 clarified the situation when Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612) granted religious freedom to Hungary.¹² Bocskay died soon thereafter, and in 1610 his crown was incorporated into the treasury as a sign justifying the Habsburg's dominance over Hungary. Nonetheless, large parts of Hungary remained Ottoman. Due to its complex historical context, the crown endures within the treasury as a document of *realpolitik* that endowed the Habsburgs, at least virtually, with additional power during a politically tense time.

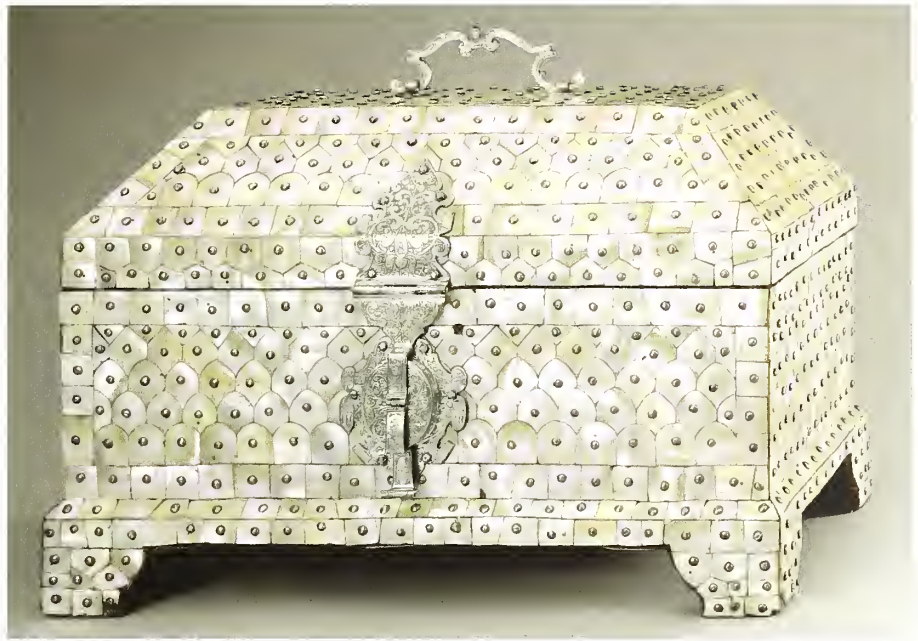
In addition to crowns, textiles were part of the regalia that continued to be used in courtly celebrations. The famous Sicilian vestments of the Holy Roman emperors (then still kept in Nuremberg) originated in the court workshops of Roger II (1095–1154). They include Arabic inscriptions and are made of Near Eastern silks that were used in imperial coronations to elevate men into emperors. Silk textiles from the east played a vital role in luxury trade throughout the Middle Ages. Even though the importance of this trade decreased by the early seventeenth century, silks continued to be appreciated and used in prominent courtly contexts. A portrait of Emperor Mathias (1557–1619) as king of Bohemia shows him wearing a sixteenth-century Ottoman silk textile, probably a kaftan. According to Otto Kurz, the garment was presented to him by the pasha of Buda in 1609. (During the Thirty Years' War it was captured by the Swedish army, and today it remains in the Church of Mariefred in Sweden, where it was tailored into an *antependium* for an altar.)¹³ Wearing an Ottoman textile in a coronation portrait conveyed political power and could imply a claim of territories that were considered to be Habsburg heritage since the death of King Louis II of Hungary in 1526 but were at the time occupied by the Ottomans, such as large parts of Hungary. One can imagine that if he had seen the portrait, the Ottoman sultan who distributed textiles of this kind to his most illustrious subjects and tributaries or vassals, which in his view included the emperor, might have interpreted it differently.

Textiles from Islamic regions not only adorned emperors and kings, but they also decorated their palaces. The earliest carpets can be found in Habsburg inventories from the early fifteenth century, and Alois Riegl demonstrated that carpets abound in the Habsburg inventories of the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁴ The living quarters of Ferdinand of Tyrol in Ambras Castle housed fifteen to twenty carpets in 1596. Their description in the inventories is not very detailed, but it is clear they were often used to cover tables and benches.¹⁵

Besides palaces, sacred places, such as chapels and monasteries, continued to be important collecting spaces in the sixteenth century. These spaces in particular shed light on the collecting preferences of the women of the imperial family. Objects from the Islamic world were often used to hold relics, and they themselves were regarded as relics in the Middle Ages in Europe.¹⁶ Among many other articles of value, Empress Anna (1585–1618), the daughter of Ferdinand of Tyrol and the wife of Emperor Mathias, donated to the *Kapuzinerkirche* in Vienna, a church she had founded, a sixteenth-century mother-of-pearl chest from the Indian region of Gujarat that was filled with relics (fig. 2). Today the chest is in the ecclesiastical treasury of the *Schatzkammer*, the imperial treasury.¹⁷

Two textiles from the Islamic world associated with two aristocratic female saints were considered relics. The textiles were antique at the time they were collected by the Habsburg women: the first is the cope of Saint Elizabeth in the convent of the *Elisabethinen* in Klagenfurt (Carinthia), which includes an Abbasid silk lampas probably from early thirteenth-century Baghdad. The cope, formerly in Vienna, was likely presented by Archduke Maximilian III (1558–1618), the *Hochmeister* of the Teutonic Order, to his sister.¹⁸ The second textile, the chasuble of Saint Hedwig von Schlesien, is a striped Ilkhanid gold brocade. In 1618 Archduke Karl (1590–1624), archbishop of Breslau, brought it to Hall in Tyrol, where his two sisters were in the chapter of nuns. In Hall the large romanesque-style chasuble was cut into post-Tridentine violin shapes by the archduchesses themselves, and the piece remains there today.¹⁹ It is telling that the splendor of Islamic textile craft served not only to heighten the prestige of emperors and saints but also to decorate palaces and churches. Such textiles were used in both sacred and profane contexts, and these spaces were not always strictly divided.

Objects from the Islamic world that were considered relics were also present in the innovative collecting concept of the renowned *Kunst- und Wunderkammern* (chambers of art and wonders). The most famous of these was the *Kunstammer* of Rudolf II (1552–1612) in Prague.²⁰ It was a complex imitation of a world order that centered on the emperor, who was himself anointed and thus was a semisacred entity within a universal program of display. His collection included an Alhambra vase from the second half of the fourteenth century, which was thought to have been one of the jars from the biblical marriage of Canaan.²¹ It was originally kept in a church on Cyprus from where it was captured by the Ottomans. An imperial ambassador in Istanbul acquired it and took it to Prague, where it eventually entered the collection of Rudolf II, who probably still considered it to be an important biblical relic.²² The vase corresponds with an entry in Rudolf's 1607–11 inventory, which is accompanied by a drawing showing the vessel with a missing handle: "1 large lithic (*steinern*) antique vase or jar, 2 ells 3 inches, seems to be of burnt earth."²³



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Reliquary box; India, Gujarat,
second half of 16th century;
wood, mother-of-pearl, silver;
22.5 x 32 x 19.5 cm; SK GS Kap. 5,
Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna.

As so often happened, the compiler of the inventory—knowingly or not—left out details concerning the vase. It was already antique by the time it was collected. The textiles and the vase demonstrate that, while relics continued to be venerated, they were also placed into different contexts of collecting—the traditional ecclesiastical treasury and the encyclopaedic *Kunst- und Wunderkammern*.

The *Kunst- und Wunderkammern* of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague and his uncle Ferdinand II of Tyrol (1529–1595) in Ambras Castle near Innsbruck counted among the most important European collections. They were more than mere assemblages of art objects. With their encyclopedic concept, they were also representative collections encompassing a *theatrum mundi* and a laboratory for alchemical and nature studies. On one hand, they housed relics such as the Alhambra vase; on the other hand, they contained scientific instruments and books as well. Specialized naturalists, craftsmen, and artists labored in workshops that were linked to the courts and their collections.²⁴ Among countless valuable, rare, and exotic items, such as stuffed crocodiles and birds, antique statues, seeds of unknown plants, and what would today be considered ethnographic material, objects from the Islamic world held a special place within the collections. They were displayed in cupboards, chests, and on tables alongside European handicraft and natural wonders. Through these microcosmic collections the owners presented themselves to a select public audience as virtual masters of the known world.

Surviving inventories make it possible to reconstruct the original collections and to identify some of the objects that are today in the Kunsthistorische Museum of Vienna.²⁵ Many items were lost, and the vague descriptions that remain do not often permit exact identification. It is certain that Ferdinand's *Kunstkammer* in Ambras held numerous items from the Islamic world from different time periods, such as valuable Ottoman and Indian daggers and other arms, various textiles in the form of clothes or bags, ivory olifants, Ottoman *terra sigillata* vessels (fine unglazed ceramics),²⁶ Gujarati objects of mother-of-pearl such as game boards, at least two manuscripts in Arabic script, Ottoman coins, and shoes. They were exhib-



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Jar; Central Asia, Timurid Empire,
second half of 15th century;
nephrite; 12.1 cm x 9.4 cm; KK 1890,
Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna.

ited in cupboards alongside corals, stuffed animals, and the rope with which Judas supposedly hanged himself.

Rudolf's slightly later *Kunstammer* was much larger in size and housed many more items from the Islamic world than that of Ferdinand. Not much is known about the actual order of things within the *Kunstammer*, but at least the inventory was organized not only according to materials (as was most of the Ambras collection) but also according to types of objects and geographic regions. Items from the sea are listed together, as are objects from distant places and similar types of curiosities. Only a fraction of the items survives. In addition to the Alhambra vase, Rudolf's collection included more than 120 Ottoman, Iranian, and Indian daggers and swords of different qualities, some of them ornamented with precious stones. Such splendidly decorated daggers and swords often served as diplomatic gifts.²⁷ Given the frequency of embassy exchanges between Vienna and Istanbul, it is possible that more of the valuable weapons arrived as imperial gifts. Moreover, in the collection were tableware and cutlery of wood, leather, and mother-of-pearl objects, boxes, and textiles in the form of handkerchiefs, bags, and dresses, all roughly identifiable as being from the Islamic world. Valuably decorated shields, quivers, and bows and arrows, horse accessories, precious writing utensils, at least eight manuscripts (one with miniatures), and loose sheets and rolls of paper (likely marbled paper), Ottoman *terra sigillata* vessels, and Iranian metalwork, such as two basins with inscriptions, were also noted. Several pages describe stone objects and porcelain without mentioning their origin. Some of them possibly originated in the Islamic world as well. The gifts of the Iranian embassy in 1609 were listed separately in the inventory and mention two pieces of jewelry, two knives set with precious stones, individual large precious stones, and tableware made of stone. A miniature painting showing the shah of Iran with gazelles seems to have been a personal gift from one of the members of the embassy.²⁸

Rudolf's inventory lists several stone vessels that he greatly appreciated. Some of the finest ones came from the Islamic world. Two fifteenth-century Timurid nephrite cups and a jar (fig. 3) remain in the Kunsthistorische Museum after the *Kunst-kammer* was integrated into it.²⁹ Apart from the 1609 Iranian embassy gift, a set of then already antique Iranian stone carved tableware was presented by the Ottoman ambassador to Emperor Ferdinand I as early as 1562.³⁰ These large jewels or semi-precious stones, appreciated for their beauty and excellent craftsmanship, inspired the Rudolfine stone carvings that the emperor promoted, such as the works of the famous Milanese stonecutter Ottavio Miseroni.³¹

There was no clear division between the secular and the sacred within the *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammern*. Objects from the Islamic world, like the emperor himself, participated in both spheres. While the Alhambra vase was considered a relic, stone items were kept for their high value and rarity and likely served as models for Rudolfine artists.³² Both pleased the emperor's aesthetic taste as well as his spiritual and scientific/alchemic mind. Both supported the universal encyclopedic system at the center of which stood the emperor himself.

Yet another innovative space for Habsburg collecting was the armory of Ferdinand of Tyrol. Within several halls next to his *Kunst-kammer* in Ambras Castle, Ferdinand organized one of Europe's most famous *Rüst-kammern*, or armories, from the late 1570s onwards.³³ Armories have a long history as storerooms of weapons created for both cities and rulers. Initially they were largely utilitarian spaces, but they developed into presentation areas designed to impress visitors during the sixteenth century. Two other famous armories were reorganized and installed during roughly the same period. In Madrid, Philip II completed an armory in 1566, and from 1588 onwards in Florence, Grand Duke Ferdinand de' Medici developed an armory in the Uffizi.³⁴ The Ambras armory seems to have been modeled on the Spanish armory. The Medici version represented a rather random collection of arms and armor, and its program was not as concise as that of the Habsburg armories. As in Ambras, the arms and armors of Charles V and Philip II in Madrid were assigned to cupboards. In addition, some space was allotted to the Ottoman trophies captured by Don Juan of Austria at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. In Ambras, Ferdinand celebrated his own triumphs against the Ottomans. One major difference between the two Habsburg armories is the fact that Philip II installed his collection to commemorate his father and himself.³⁵ Ferdinand of Tyrol's *Rüst-kammer* featured a more original program and additionally stands out from these others due to its partial publication in Schrenck von Notzing's *Armamentarium Heroicum* (Armory of heroes) in 1601 and 1603.³⁶ Both its display and its publication were innovations attributed to Ferdinand and his counselors. He used his network of family members and agents to acquire relevant objects for his armory; many arms were gifts from envoys. In

the printed version of his armory of heroes, contemporary and past model rulers, princes, and generals were depicted and described. In the actual exhibition space, the heroes were represented as sculptural figures bearing their armor. Among the noblest kings from the Islamic world was Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (circa 1495–1566), who was depicted with his sabre. The vambrace attributed to him (fig. 4) is not shown in the printed illustration in the *Armamentarium Heroicum*, or *Heldenrüstkammer*, even though it is mentioned in the Ambras inventory of 1595.³⁷

In creating his *Heldenrüstkammer*, Ferdinand was surely inspired by the *armeria* in Madrid as well as by the works and sophisticated collection of portraits of famous people assembled by the humanist bishop and historian Paolo Giovio (1483–1552) in Como, Italy. As a supplement to his collection of portraits, Giovio published in Florence in 1551 *Elogia virorum bellica virtute illustrium...* (Eulogy of famous men of arms...), seven volumes that he dedicated to Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, the father of Ferdinand's brother-in-law.³⁸ Giovio describes the lives of heroes, including Ottoman sultans, from antiquity to the sixteenth century. Ferdinand, who had traveled to Italy and owned a portrait collection himself, must have known this work and went a step further: not only did he display the portraits of the famous men, but he also showcased sculptures of the heroes in their armor.³⁹ In their midst Ferdinand presented himself as an ideal prince. The criteria for celebration within this display were the deeds of the men, not their religion. Sultan Suleyman and his grand vizier Mehmet Sokolli Pasha (1505–1579) were represented as equals to the European emperors, princes, and generals. Armor was seen as a historic document that preserved the memory of lives and deeds.

Next to the *Rüstkammer* Ferdinand arranged a more propagandistic room, called the *Türkenkammerl*, that was decorated predominantly with Ottoman arms from the mid-sixteenth century. Some of them represented booty Ferdinand and another imperial general had captured. In the center of the room, Ferdinand's armor was displayed on a mannequin mounted on horseback. Among the extant objects are Ottoman armor (some originally mounted on horseback) and weapons, such as bows and arrows, wicker shields, daggers, sabres, full harnesses, and a saddle. They were displayed to commemorate Ferdinand's victory over the mighty Ottomans. Habsburg successes against the Ottomans were rare during the sixteenth century.⁴⁰

Apart from accompanying the ideal men depicted in the armory, from being considered pieces of jewelry in the *Kunstkammer*, and from being used to heighten the profile of Ferdinand himself in the *Türkenkammerl*, Ottoman weapons were used in tournaments staged by princes as amusement for the court and as a means of propaganda. Popular propaganda against the Ottomans, especially in the form of printed illustration, was generally inflammatory, but so too were images of other enemies of the Habsburg dominions, such as the German Protestants and the



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Ottoman vambrace attributed to Sultan Süleyman I; Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1560; iron, silk, gold; 60 cm; C 52, Kunsthistorische Museum, Vienna.

French.⁴¹ The different conceptions of objects from the Islamic world within the intimate sphere of collecting indicate the more nuanced attitude of the Habsburgs.

In addition to showing the development of conceptions of and contexts for collecting, examining early modern Habsburg holdings of objects from the Islamic world reveals the complex cross-cultural relations and multilayered receptions that characterized the dynasty's multifaceted attitudes towards these regions. Interestingly, many objects, especially those from religious contexts, were antiquities by the time they entered the collections. Their antiquity enhanced their spiritual value. The objects were appreciated for more than their beauty, quality, and rarity. For instance, the Bosckay crown was viewed as a sign of political claims. Textiles and other objects transformed men into emperors and decorated palaces. Relics and reliquaries mediated between heaven and earth. Weapons in the armory highlighted the martial glories of the dynasty and were used for propaganda. Finally, as is characteristic for the intellectual development of the early modern period, a heterogeneous selection of rare and curious items from the Islamic world was embedded in the encyclopedic concept of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammern*.

Objects from the Islamic world reveal the ambiguous attitude of the Habsburgs towards the Ottomans as well as their admiration for the art and history of the Islamic world. This study of the collection of Islamic objects defines the Habsburgs as patrons of the arts and sciences in addition to being religious believers and cunning politicians. Politics, medieval tradition, and the awakening of early modern science met within increasingly complex collecting practices that served to heighten the spiritual, political, and intellectual prestige of the Habsburgs.

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NOTES

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- 2 Alfons Lhotsky, *Die Geschichte der Sammlungen*, 3 vols., second part, first half (Vienna: Verl. F. Berger, 1941–45), pp. 1–108.
- 3 Otto Kurz, "Künstlerische Beziehungen zwischen Prag und Persien zur Zeit Kaiser Rudolfs II.," in *The Decorative Arts of Europe and the Islamic East* (London: Dorian Press, 1977); Helmut Slaby, *Bindenschild und Sonnenlöwe* (Vienna: Verl. d. Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), pp. 1–30; Dorothea Duda, "Islamische Kunst und der Westen am Beispiel Wien," in *Akten des 25. internat. Kongr. f. Kunst-geschichte-Europa und die Kunst des Islam*, vol. 5, ed. Oleg Grabar (Vienna: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1985), pp. 43–56; Jan Paul Niederkorn, "Zweifrontenkrieg gegen die Osmanen," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, vol. 104, nos. 3–4 (1996), pp. 310–23; Ebba Koch, "The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors," in *Imperial Art and Mughal Ideology: Collected Essays*, ed. Ebba Koch (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1–11; Marianna Shreve Simpson, "Gifts for the Shah: An Episode in Habsburg-Safavid Relations during the Reigns of Philip III and 'Abbas I," in *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts*, ed. Linda Komaroff (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 125–38; Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, eds., *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 373–409.
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- 5 Alois Riegl, "Ältere orientalische Teppiche aus dem Besitze des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, vol. 13 (1892), pp. 330–31; Angela Völker, *Die orientalischen Knüppteppiche im MAK* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), pp. 9–15; Barbara Karl, "Galanterie di cose rare: Filippo Sassetti's Shopping List for the Medici Brothers," *Itinerario* 22, no. 3 (2008), pp. 23–41.
- 6 Duda, "Islamische Kunst und der Westen," p. 46.
- 7 Ogier Ghiselin de Busbeck, *Vier Briefe aus der Türkei* (Erlangen: Verlag der Philosophischen Akademie, 1926).

- 8 *Katalog der Historischen Ausstellung der Stadt Wien* (Vienna: Verlag des Gemeinderathes, 1883), pp. 207, 214, nos. 651, 669.
- 9 Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 21659, fol. 128. Quotation: Documentary sources for the Arts and Humanities (Medici Archive Database, Inc.). <http://documents.medici.org/>
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- 11 Hermann Fillitz, "Die islamischen Objekte in der Sammlung für Plastik und Kunstgewerbe des Kunsthistorischen Museums," *Bustan* (4/1963–1/1964), pp. 93–95; Rotraud Bauer, "Der Mantel Rogers II. und die siculo normannischen Gewänder aus den Hofwerkstätten in Palermo," in *Nobiles Officinae*, ed. Wilfried Seipel (Milan: Skira, 2004), pp. 115–23.
- 12 Wilfried Seipel, ed., *Hauptwerke der Weltlichen Schatzkammer* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2005), p. 182; Rotraud Bauer, *Weltliche und Geistliche Schatzkammer* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1987), pp. 92–95; Ivan Szanto, *Safavid Art and Hungary—The Esterhazy Appliqué in Context* (Piliscaba: Avicenna Institute, 2010), pp. 60–61.
- 13 The portrait of Emperor Mathias by Hans von Aachen is in Prague, Sbirky Pražského hradu (Collections of the city of Prague); Kurz, "Künstlerische Beziehungen," p. 8.
- 14 Riegl, "Ältere orientalische Teppiche," pp. 326–30; Völker, *Die orientalischen Knüpfteppiche*, pp. 7–30.
- 15 The Ambras inventory of 1596 is published in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, vol. 7, pt. 2 (1888), Reg. 5556.
- 16 Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianised* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1996).
- 17 Inv. SK GS Kap. 5. Similar chests are listed in the inventories of Rudolf II and Ferdinand of Tyrol, which renders a clear identification of the object in the inventory difficult. A similar chest is in Ambras. Rotraud Bauer and Herbert Haupt, eds., "Das Kunstkammerinventar Kaiser Rudolfs II., 1607–1611," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, vol. 72 (1976). Ambras inventory, *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen*, vol. 7, pt. 2 (1888), Reg. 5556.
- 18 Dieter Blume, ed., *Elisabeth von Thüringen* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007), pp. 71–72; Regina Knaller, "Der sogenannte Mantel der Hl. Elisabeth," in *Konservierungswissenschaften und Restaurierung heute*, eds. Gabriela Krist and Martina Griesser-Stermscheg (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), pp. 191–205.
- 19 Joseph Gottschalk, "Ein Fürstenmantel der Herzogin Hedwig von Schlesien aus chinesischem Goldbrokat?" *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, no. 15 (1966), pp. 403–56.
- 20 See, for example, Julius von Schlosser, *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance* (Leipzig: Klinkhart und Biermann, 1908); Elisabeth Scheicher, *Die Kunst und Wunderkammern der Habsburger* (Vienna: Molden, 1979); Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds., *The Origins of Museums* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Beket Bukovinská, "Zum Exoticabestand der Kunstkammer Rudolfs II in Prag," in Trnek and Haag, *Exotica*, vol. 3, pp. 205–19; Eliska Fuciková, ed., *Rudolf II. und Prag* (Prague: Verwaltung Prager Burg, 1997); Lubomír Konečný and Beket Bukovin-ská, eds., *Rudolf II, Prague and the world—Papers from the international conference* (Prague: Artefactum, 1998); Eliska Fuciková et al., eds., *Rudolf II, Prague and the World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, *The Mastery of Nature: Aspects of Art, Science and Humanism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jürgen Schultze, ed., *Prag um 1600—Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II* (Vienna/Freren: Luca Verlag, 1988); Robert J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Wilfried Seipel, ed., *Exotica—Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance* (Milan: Skira, 2000); Trnek and Haag, *Exotica*, vol. 3, pp. 247–61.
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- 22 Otto Kurz, "The strange history of an Alhambra vase," in *The Decorative Arts of Europe and the Islamic East* (London: Dorian Press, 1977), pp. 205–12.
- 23 Painted and described in the inventory of Rudolf II: see Bauer and Haupt, "Das Kunstkammerinventar," in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, vol. 72 (1976), p. XXII and p. 25.
- 24 Fuciková, *Rudolf II, Prague and the World*; Brian W. Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- 25 Bauer and Haupt, "Das Kunstkammerinventar," in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, vol. 72 (1976), and for Ambras inventory, *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen*, vol. 7, pt. 2 (1888), Reg. 5556.
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- 27 See Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan*, pp. 44, 45, 105, 129, 201, and 230.
- 28 Bauer and Haupt, "Das Kunstkammerinventar," in *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, vol. 72 (1976). It includes the list of Iranian gifts on pp. 30, 504–10. The first half of the inventory in particular abounds with objects from the Islamic world. Niederkorn, "Zweifrontenkrieg gegen die Osmanen," pp. 310–23. David William Davies, *Elizabethans Errant: The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and his three Sons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- 29 Seipel, *Exotica*, pp. 143–46, nos. 54, 55, 56 (inv. nos. KK, 1700, KK 1874, KK 1890). Similar items were found in other inventories listed in the catalogue. Karin Rühdanz, "'Ein kändlein von schwartzgriener igiada': Persianate nephrite vessels," in *Mediaeval and Modern Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies held in Vienna on 18–22 September 2007* by the Societas Iranologica Europaea, ed. Maria Szuppe, Anna Krasnowolska, and Claus V. Pedersen (=Cahiers de Studia Iranica 45), (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 2011), pp. 179–92.
- 30 Riegl, "Ältere orientalische Teppiche," p. 330.
- 31 Rudolf Distelberger, "Dionysio und Ferdinand Eusebio Miseroni," *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, vol. 75 (1979), pp. 109–93.
- 32 See a Fatimid rock crystal vase, today in the Freer Gallery of Art, with a rim from Rudolfine Prague (F1949.14). Esin Atil, *Art of the Arab World* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1975).
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- 34 Juan de Valencia, *Catálogo histórico-descriptivo de le real armeria de Madrid* (Madrid, 1898). The Madrid *armeria* also included trophies from Tunis and Lepanto. The Florence *Armeria* inventory from 1631 can be found here: Archivio dello Stato Firenze, Guardaroba Medicea 513.
- 35 Alvaro Soler del Campo, *The Art of Power: Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain* (Madrid: Seacex, 2010), pp. 25–47.
- 36 Jacob Schrenck von Notzing, *Ambrassische Heldenrüstkammer* (1603, repr., Nürnberg: Christoph Weigels Seel Wittib., 1735).
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- 38 Linda S. Klinger, "The Portrait Collection of Paolo Giovio," PhD diss., Princeton University, 1991; T. C. Zimmermann Price, *Paolo Giovio: The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-century Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 39 Luchner, *Denkmal*, pls. 9–16, 42–44, 49, 53–58.
- 40 Veronika Sandbichler, *Türkische Kostbarkeiten aus dem Kunsthistorischen Museum* (Vienna: KHM, 1997); Auer, "Das Inventarium," I–VI.
- 41 Alfred Auer and Wielfried Seipel, eds., *Wir sind Helden–habsburgische Feste in der Renaissance* (Vienna: KHM, 2005); Karl Vocelka, *Die politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II* (Vienna: Verl. d. Österr. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981).

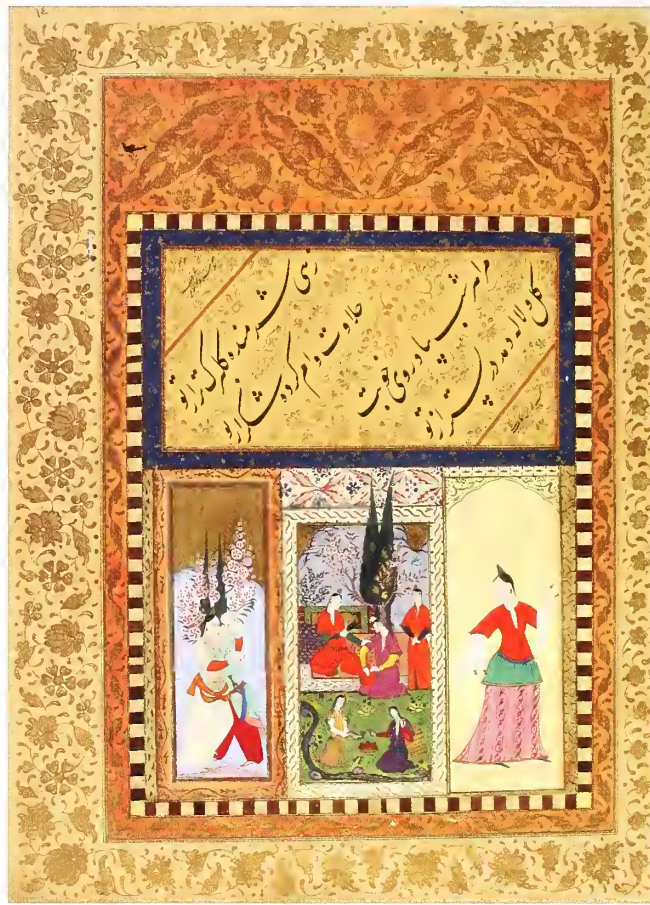
THE ALBUM OF AHMED I

Abstract

An album made for the Ottoman sultan Ahmed I (reigned 1603–17) in circa 1610 contains calligraphies, paintings, and drawings that reveal a great deal about artistic patronage and collecting in the Ottoman world. This study provides an analysis of the album, which is ms. no. B 408 in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library. It begins with the preface and its extraordinary discussion of the significance of the visual arts. The preface describes how and why the album was created, while the album's contents reveal a different facet of Ottoman collecting practices. It becomes evident through a close study of these materials that, although Persianate calligraphy, poetry, and even modes of depiction predominate here, the album is deliberately anchored in its Ottoman context. In fact, with its choice of materials and methods for arranging them, the album illuminates Ottoman opinions on the relationship between their own artistic traditions and those of the Persianate cultural sphere.

ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING ALBUMS in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library was compiled for the Ottoman sultan Ahmed I (reigned 1603–17). Identified as ms. no. B 408, it measures 47.5 by 33.5 cm and contains thirty-two folios of painting, calligraphy, and illumination (fig. 1).¹ With its preface, arrangement, and contents, the album of Ahmed I draws upon the Safavid album tradition, but it departs sufficiently to constitute a localized, Ottoman example of the genre. This complex work of art deserves detailed study to unlock its multitude of meanings, which I hope to do in a forthcoming monograph. This article is a preliminary glance at what the album reveals about artistic patronage and collecting in the Ottoman world. An analysis of the album preface's extraordinary discussion of the significance of the visual arts, via its description of how and why the album was created, precedes a discussion of the album's contents, which reveal a different facet of Ottoman collecting practices. It becomes evident through the close study of these materials that, although Persianate calligraphy, poetry, and even modes of depiction predominate here, the album is deliberately anchored in its Ottoman context. In fact, through the choice of materials and methods for arranging them, the album illuminates Ottoman opinions on the relationship between their own artistic traditions and those of the Persianate cultural sphere.

The preface is attributed to the Ottoman courtier Kalender Pasha, who died in 1616.² Kalender's renown for paper joinery is evident from Mustafa Âli's eulogy to him at the end of his *Menakıb-ı Hünerveran* (Exploits of the artists).³ In addition to his artistic skills, Kalender was also a successful bureaucrat. With the aid of a calligraphy album he presented to Ahmed I, Kalender was promoted from his post as a secretary-treasurer of the second rank and was appointed to supervise the



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Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 14a.

All images Ottoman, Istanbul, ca. 1610, opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper; 47.5 x 33.5 cm. Topkapı Palace Museum Library, ms. no. B 408. Photos: Hadiye Cangökcü.

construction of Ahmed I's mosque, which was built between 1609 and 1617. He eventually became a vizier in the Imperial Council in 1614.⁴ Kalender was clearly well established in the Ottoman court of the early seventeenth century, and he seems to have taken part in the literary and cultural life of the court as well. This is perhaps most evident in the preface to the Ahmed I album.

The content and structure of the album's preface echo those of sixteenth-century Persian, or Safavid, album prefaces, suggesting Kalender had access to these kinds of texts.⁵ Yet, compared to the Safavid prefaces, the present one places unprecedented emphasis on the power of the visual. Kalender begins with praise of God as creator and inventor (*mubdi'* and *mūcīd*) of beautiful and artful things. Then he describes God's creation of Adam, saying he "molded and depicted" (*taḥmīr* and *taṣvīr*) Adam with his own hands out of the four elements and breathed life into him, as is expressed in a quotation from the Koran (15:29): "I blew in Him from my soul" (*Nafalḥtu fihi min rūhi*).⁶ This visceral description of the Creation evokes sculptural and painterly activities with the words "molded" and "depicted." While using metaphors of painting and writing to praise God's creation was common in Safavid album prefaces, this degree of specificity with regards to depiction, and the reference to plasticity found in the word "molded," are quite unusual. On the other hand, calligraphy often plays a large role in the metaphors used by Safavid authors when writing prefaces, but it is not emphasized in this album at all, even though it contains many examples of calligraphy. The focus in the preface is clearly on the art of depiction and the wonders of the visual.

The emphasis on the arts continues with a description of the sultan's appreciation of beauty and wisdom.

Since his beautiful heart is always full of the jewels of knowledge and the pearls of meaning and wisdom, those resplendent pearls of art and invention (the most precious of the precious speech, and the most beautiful of the beauties of design) which are in the palace without fault and the irreproachable pavilion, decorate the daughters of subtleties with embellishments of words and sights, and tricky ornaments, and have seduced the sovereign and astonished and excited the nature of the people of the heart.⁷

In other words, the palace is full of awe-inspiring, beautiful, “resplendent” works of art that have won the hearts of the courtiers and the sultan. The words chosen here to describe the effects of the “pearls of art and invention” are “seduced,” “astonished,” and “excited” (*ferifte*, *alufte*, *aşufte*). They ascribe a mysterious power to artworks and suggest a certain nervousness about their incomprehensible potency.

This subtle anxiety results in a defense of images, or an explanation of why they are included in the album. Every time the mirror of existence is observed by those with penetrating eyes, Kalender begins, it shows designs and figures, but it becomes rusty because of daily occurrences. In these useless days (*eyyām-ı nāfercām*), he says, if one contemplates some respectable figures (*şuver-i mu'teber*) and sights of good example (*seyir-i pür 'ibr*), which are demonstrated by numerous kinds of colorful designs, they will be the source of great learning, and they will ornament the eye of experience.⁸ Thus, he presents the images in this album not only as tools for learning and sources of wisdom but also as means to counter troubling times and as sources for rejuvenation.⁹ He then adds that they are appreciated by the sultan: they enliven his spirit and give pleasure to his luminous conscience and his heart.¹⁰ In these few lines, then, is a rationale for collecting paintings and also for representing them in the album. The next sentence, which relates the sultan wanted these materials to be collected in an album, begins with the word “consequently” (*binâ'en aleyh*). The rejuvenating value of art, it appears, is precisely why the sultan ordered the album. In other words, because works of art could teach and inspire people, the sultan asked Kalender to organize several examples in an album format. Presumably this would make it easier for people to view the works of art, and it would enhance the power of the artwork by juxtaposing select pieces. The visual relationships among paintings, calligraphies, and drawings carefully arranged on specific pages could perhaps guide viewers to conclusions they may not have otherwise drawn by looking at the individual works of art.

While similar imagery can be found in prefaces to Safavid albums, it is rarely activated to this degree.¹¹ By presenting images as a means to something else, Kalender suggests they are not simply admired for their beauty, but that beauty is employed in the service of a greater goal—wisdom, knowledge, and rejuvenation. The benefits, it is implied, make up for the anxiety caused by the mysterious powers of images. The depictions become particularly important when the “mirror of existence” is rusty, because the images are then the only way of demonstrating the “respectable figures” and the “sights of good example” from which viewers can learn. The use of the mirror motif alludes to contemporary notions of the creative process, by which the forms that the eye perceives were understood to be stored in the artist’s humor, which was thought to be a polished surface.¹² The mirror motif appears in other album prefaces as a metaphor or intermediary for visual perception and depiction. It is also a Sufi metaphor for self-improvement, that is, polishing the heart so it can reflect God’s creation.¹³ The phrase “people of the heart,” a reference to Ahmed’s courtiers, is also related. With his word choices, Kalender specifically argues for the value of art as a vehicle for sensual and cognitive renewal. What one cannot get from the mirror of existence during uncertain times, one can learn from paintings. Kalender thus presents a contemporary, courtly Ottoman view of the significance of art as mysterious, powerful, and ultimately useful. In the Ottoman context, such a strong and explicit statement on the value of painting is, to my knowledge, exclusive to this album preface, which renders it that much more unusual and important.

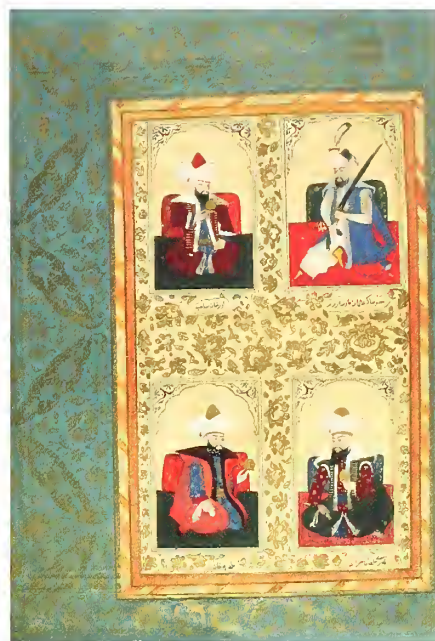
In addition to presenting a rationale for collecting individual paintings and calligraphies, Kalender’s preface also provides information about artistic patronage and production at the Ottoman court. The sultan had amassed (*birikdürüb*) and sent specific pieces to Kalender. This indicates the ruler recognized the album both as a miniature version of his collection and as a memorial to himself.¹⁴ These works had been given to the sultan as gifts, according to the preface, or they accompanied requests for favors. By highlighting the sultan’s involvement—in first owning such pieces, and then in selecting them for the album—Kalender praises his good taste, wisdom, and wealth.

Kalender’s job as agent was to organize the pieces chosen by the sultan, and he does not shy away from boasting of his album-making abilities. He states the sultan wanted these sheets to be arranged “with respect to each one’s relationship to each other” (*her birisiniñ bir birisine münāsebeti ile tertīb olunub*) and illuminated and bound into an album. He repeats the phrase “each one’s relationship to each other” when he writes that he joined paintings (*taşvīrāt*) and calligraphic panels (*muḳaṭṭaāt*) and pasted them onto colored papers and turned them into an album.¹⁵ He presents his organization of the album as being guided by aesthetic concerns: “It is no secret to those who see minutiae that these have been arranged with respect



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Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 6b.



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Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 7a.

to either their color or their cutting or their height and width so that all their edges match up.”¹⁶ The act of album-making is explained here as an exercise in composition, one that valorizes attention to detail and skill in geometry, and thereby attests to Kalender’s aesthetic sensibilities. The examples of calligraphy were matched with paintings not by provenance or topic but rather by their visual characteristics, that is, by the style of depiction, the calligraphic script, and the size and appearance of the sheets. This detailed description of the task of album-making is an attempt to put the art of “paper joinery” (*vassale*) on the same level as calligraphy and painting. Perhaps he is suggesting that his act of presenting these materials is a means of activating their wonder and wisdom-inspiring capacities.

Although Kalender emphasizes the visual aspects of his task, his organization of the album materials betrays a deliberate forging of other connections between the materials. These connections, considered in tandem with the contents of the preface, are highly informative about the Ottoman view of the relationship between their artistic traditions and those of the Persians. Two threads provide information on this matter. The first is the juxtaposition of pages from historical manuscripts with portraits of the Ottoman sultans (figs. 2 and 3). This is surely inspired by Kalender’s description of paintings as vehicles for learning. He is even more explicit about this view in the preface of the *Falname* of Ahmed I, where he explains that he compiled stories and images of prophets, saintly men, and past kings because sultans and great rulers should learn from the actions of memorable men.¹⁷ This implies images of heroes from the past will incite the rulers of the present to wise actions. Kalender’s particular framing of images in the album, then, is intended to activate their power to inspire the sultan and his courtiers.

The paintings in question include five manuscript pages extracted from a book on Ottoman history. All are of the same size and are consistent in style. Their sparse backgrounds in pastel colors, the pose and depiction of human figures, the compositions against single or double hills, and the inclusion of small lakes and water canals are strongly reminiscent of the paintings in the first volume of the



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Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 10a.

Hünername (Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1523), an Ottoman dynastic history. Judging by the style of the paintings and the text, these works are probably from a similar book produced by the court historian's office around the same time and were incorporated into the album, either because the book for which they were originally made was damaged or perhaps never completed.

The titles above the images on folio 6b both begin with the phrase "Of the ancestors of the House of Osman" and name two of the Ottomans' Oghuz ancestors, Yalvaç Beg and Kurtarı Beg. The ancestors named on the surrounding folios are Sunghur, Çemendur, and Tugrul, all of whom are part of the same genealogy.¹⁸ These heroes who give alms and clothes to the poor, wield their swords in cunning ways, hunt with falcons, tame wild horses, and offer gifts to the caliph are the exemplary predecessors of the Ottomans. They are important links in the genealogical chain that connects Ahmed I with his ancestor Oghuz. Portraits of the first four Ottoman sultans (fig. 3 and fol. 7a) are inserted into the midst of these ancestral images, creating a strong link between the present and the past. The sultanic portraits in the album localize and even personalize this connection for Ahmed I. By arranging these specific images with respect to each other, Kalender not only alludes to art's capacity to renew, but he also actualizes it as a way to compel Ahmed to great deeds by reminding him of his awe-inspiring genealogy.

The importance of the Ottoman dynastic theme in the album becomes clear with folio 10a (fig. 4), which contains a portrait of an Ottoman sultan as well as two panels of *nastaliq* calligraphy. One of them is signed by Shah Mahmud al Mashhadi and begins:



5



6

5
Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 31b.

6
Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 31a.

Kāsh bar ham khvord in silsila-ya zāhir-e mā
Tā āz in tafarruqhā jam' shavad khāter-e mā

I wish that his external chain of ours would break apart
So that from this separation our minds would come together¹⁹

The poem is probably incorporated here because it contains the word “chain” (*silsila*), which is one of the titles given to Ottoman historical works that include dynastic portraits and form genealogical chains. The fact that the album has numerous other examples of close word-and-image relationships strengthens this possibility.²⁰ The connection between the calligraphic panel and the portrait is not simply a visual one; it also relates to content. Kalender’s organizational choices here strengthen the link between the Oghuz ancestors and the sultanic portraits, thus enhancing their power to signify.

A second thread is formed by the calligraphic examples in the album, which are exclusively in the *nastaliq* script (figs. 5 and 6) and constitute a different kind of *silsila*. Kalender states in the preface that the album includes calligraphies by Nur Ali, Shah Mahmud, and Mir Ali; paintings by artists whose works resemble those by Bihzad and Erjeng and Mani; and designs by Yari and other illuminators who were well known in Rum and Ajam. He mentions two cultural spheres: Rum, which mostly refers to Ottoman lands; and Ajam, the Persianate world. The Persian calligraphers represented here—Mir Ali Haravi (died 1543), Shah Mahmud Nishapuri (died 1564–65), Shah Muhammad al Mashhadi (active circa 1560), and Malik



7

7

Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 24b.

Daylami (died 1561–62)—are sixteenth-century representatives of the Persianate (Ajami) school of *nastaliq* script, whose calligraphic genealogies go back to Mir Ali Tabrizi.²¹ The calligraphy examples are all *ghazals* of Persian lyric poetry.

The Ottoman, or Rumi, calligraphers are Derviş Receb-i Rumi, Ali Çavuş-u Dergah, Mevlevi-i Rumi, and Mehmed Emin al Katib al Mekki (fig. 6 and fol. 31a). They all write in the *nastaliq* script and are almost indistinguishable from their Safavid counterparts. Writings by Rumi and Ajami calligraphers often grace opposite sides of the same folio (figs. 5 and 6) or facing pages, calling for a comparison between the two. The juxtaposition of masters from different geographies emphasizes the links between these different practitioners, and at the same time it sets up the Rumi school against the Ajami one.²²

Interpreting this juxtaposition in relation to the wider artistic context of the early seventeenth century is compelling. By this time, an identifiable “Ottoman” visual idiom had been created for illustrated manuscripts, constituting a deliberate move away from Persianate styles.²³ The historical manuscripts were written predominantly in *naskh*, and by the end of the sixteenth century they were no longer in Persian. The focus on *nastaliq* emphasizes that in other Ottoman contexts, Persianate aesthetics were still appreciated. This is also evident from the fact that all the poetry incorporated into the album is in Persian. There are no verses by Baki or Fuzuli, the renowned Ottoman poets of the previous generation who composed their work in Ottoman Turkish. Yet, the present album actually contains more Ottoman specimens than the album of Murad III. In the fifty-one folios of



8

8
Kalender, *Album of Ahmed I*, fol. 19a.

that album, only two works are by Ottoman calligraphers.²⁴ Similarly, the preface also emulates the structure of those in Persian albums, but it departs from them in significant ways, as discussed above. By recontextualizing Persian pieces and juxtaposing them with Ottoman ones, thereby comfortably incorporating the *nastaliq* style and Persian poetry with Ottoman historical scenes and sultanic portraits, the present album seems to signal difference and continuity simultaneously. The Persianate cultural heritage is not simply presented as “other”; rather, it is claimed as a part of the Ottoman artistic genealogy, and it is deliberately appropriated. There is, however, the added twist of juxtaposing the Persianate material with contemporary Ottoman works. Just as the portraits of Ottoman leaders are linked with rulers of the past, so the works of Ottoman calligraphers are linked with masters from the Safavid lands. In this period of intense rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid states, the juxtaposition takes on added significance.

The album also bears traces of personal relationships, which further anchor it in the complex culture of the Ottoman court. Two examples are signed by court scribes: folio 9b bears the signature of Ali, Çavuş-u Dergah; and folio 12b is addressed “for the sake of Kalender Efendi” (*Be celhat-ı Kalender Efendi*) and is signed by Katib al Sultani Amir Muhammad Amin al Tammudi. Folio 5b is thought to be written in the sultan’s own hand. A similar balance can be found in the paintings. While a majority of them resemble Safavid single-page drawings (figs. 1 and 7), examples of a burgeoning Ottoman genre style also exist (fig. 8). Stylistically, the depiction of the body in the single-figure studies, with silhouettes that curve like bows and

display wispy, curly sideburns and wide hips, are much closer to drawings by the Safavids Sadiqi Beg or Aqa Riza than they are to works by the Ottoman painters Osman or Nakkaş Hasan.

Kalender Pasha took Persianate forms, whether the structure of an album preface or actual pieces of Safavid calligraphy, and seamlessly incorporated them into an Ottoman album that was anchored in the local context through the use of Ottoman artworks, signatures by courtiers, images from Ottoman history, and even the sultan's own calligraphy. The unmistakably Ottoman work of art explicitly draws on the Persianate cultural world, but it does so in juxtaposition with Ottoman examples. The album easily traverses what might be seen as aesthetic boundaries between Ottoman and Persian worlds, and it reminds us that the Ottomans deliberately participated in the artistic trends of the early modern Islamic world. Despite the development of specific visual idioms by the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals at this time, the three artistic traditions still shared aesthetic preferences, some of which link them to their common artistic ancestor, the Timurid court. Certainly the collecting preferences of Ahmed I, as exemplified by his album, suggest the Ottomans viewed their own artistic tradition as being distinct from but still closely related to the Persianate sphere. The album does not present a linear view of Ottoman art history, but it does have a synecdochic relationship to that corpus, as it does to the collections in the palace, which consist of treasures from Ajam and Rum. Kalender Pasha, as he signals in his preface, uses the works of art in the album to teach his audience about Ottoman history, inspiring them to follow in the illustrious footsteps of their ancestors. He also presents Ottoman art in the larger context of Islamic art, and he reminds us of the links between Rumi and Ajami masters and styles, all of which are capable of enlivening our spirits and giving pleasure to our consciences and hearts.

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NOTES

- 1 The binding is no longer intact, and it is likely that the order of the folios has been changed. David J. Roxburgh, in "Disorderly Conduct?: F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album," *Muqarnas* 15 (1998), pp. 32–57, shows five folios in the so-called Bellini Album at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that might have belonged to the album of Ahmed I. The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for *Ars Orientalis* and David J. Roxburgh for their helpful comments on this paper.
- 2 B. 408, fols. 1b–4b. The anonymous album compiler states that he had presented other albums to Ahmed I. Based on this, and on the stylistic similarity between this preface and that of the *Falname* prepared for Ahmed I, scholars attribute this album to Kalender Paşa. See Serpil Bağcı, "The *Falnama* of Ahmed I," in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, ed. Massumeh Farhad with Serpil Bağcı (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2009), pp. 68–75. For an overview of the album and its preface, see Ahmed Süheyl Ünver, "L'Album d'Ahmed Ier," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario orientale di Napoli*, n. s. 8 (1963), pp. 127–62.
- 3 Mustafa Ali Gelibolulu, *Menâkıb-ı Hünerverân* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1926), pp. 76–77. Bağcı, "Falnama of Ahmed I," p. 68, provides an English translation.
- 4 Muştafâ Nâimâ, *Târîh-i Nâimâ: Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fi hulâsat-ı alhâbâr-ı'l-hâfîkayn*, 6 vols. (Istanbul, 1864–66), vol. 2, p. 131. For Kalender's career, see Bağcı, "Falnama of Ahmed I," p. 68; Emine Fetvacı, "Enriched Narratives and Empowered Images in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Manuscripts," *Ars Orientalis* 40 (2011), pp. 243–66; Tülay Artan, "Arts and Architecture," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 408–81, especially p. 416. Artan suggests Kalender Paşa might have been associated with antinomian mystics because of the similarity of his name to the term for these groups, or he had made his way to the capital from areas under Safavid influence.
- 5 David J. Roxburgh, in *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 83–121, analyzes the content and structure of Persianate album prefaces. I am grateful to him for his comments on an earlier version of this paper during the HIAA 2010 symposium and for encouraging me to distinguish Kalender's argument for the power of images from that of Safavid prefaces.
- 6 This is an unusual allusion that also has parallels to the Koranic story of Jesus sculpting a bird out of clay and breathing life into it via a miracle from God (Koran 3:49).
- 7 *Dâimâ cevâlîr-i 'irfân-ı 'avârîf ve lâ'âlî-yi me'ânî ve ma'ârif birle kalb-i latîfleri menlû olmagla ol dürrer-i gurer-i şanâ'î ve bedâ'inü sara-yi bî 'ayb ve serâperde-yi lâreybde olan enfes-i nefâys-i nuikâlât ve ihsân-ı mühlâsin-i muşavvirât benât-ı nikâta halye-yi hulel elfâz ve ebşarla zîver ve zib virûb zînet-i dilferib ile kûlib cihânbanî-yi ferîfte ve tab'-i ehl-i dilânî alüfte ve aşüfte itmîşlerdir*
- 8 *tahsîl-i sermâye-i 'ilm-i lîkmet ve sebeb-i tekmiil-i piraye-yi 'ayn-i 'ibret*
- 9 Kalender also characterizes images as such in the preface to his *Falname*. Topkapı Palace Museum, ms. no. H. 1703, fols. 4b–6a. Translated in Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr., and Sergei Tourkin, "Appendix A: Reproductions and

- Translations of the Dispersed *Falnama*, H. 1702 and H. 1703," in Farhad and Bağcı, eds., *Falnama*, p. 296.
- 10 *pādişāh-ı 'ālī derecāta mūcib-i tenşit-i hāfır-ı hāfır ve mustavcib-i teteyyib-i zāmīr-i nūnūr ve kalb-i müstenīr olmak*
- 11 See David J. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 18–20, 188–96, 272–94, and Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 83–121, 181–89, for similar imagery in Safavid albums.
- 12 Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 184–85: "Integral to the Safavid culture was the understanding that by perception, forms were transferred (by intromission) to the artist's humor, which was thought to be a polished surface. In the act of perceiving, the image became impressed on the humor. In a second stage, the forms from both eyes were impressed on the composite sense, and in the third stage they were stored in the memory [*khiyāl*]."
- 13 Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 181–89; Priscilla Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting," in *Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), pp. 9–34, especially pp. 12–15. Some of these albums were already in the Topkapı by the early seventeenth century.
- 14 See Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, pp. 112–15, for consideration of the album as a memorial of its owner or maker. Other examples from Ahmed I's collection can be found in the *Falname* (H. 1703), which was published in full in Farhad and Bağcı, eds., *Falnama*, as well as a calligraphy album prepared for Ahmed I (Topkapı Palace Museum, H. 2171), which also contains examples of *nastaliq* calligraphy and writings in other scripts.
- 15 *mukatta'āt ve taşvīrāt evrākını biri birisine münasebeti ile envā'i renk amīz kağıdlara vaşl idüp muraqqa' itmek*
- 16 *Rengāreng olan nakş-ı buķalemun-u abri ve sultānī ve alımedabādī ve devletābādī ve hatāyī ve 'adilśāhī ve harīrī ve semer ķandī evrāķdır. Ve eger şan'at-ı vaşşālīde her bir ķita'nın kenarlarına feresgūrī alaca kumaş tarzında iķişer ve üçer kat ĥurde evrāķdır. Ĥurdebinān ve ĥurdedān ehl-i 'irfāna ĥafī ve puşīde degilgir her birisine im'ān-ı nazarla iltifāt mütte'allik olsa inşallālā te'alā çahar guşeleri ve mukabelesi cemi'en biribirisine eger renginde ve eger cerminde ve tül-u 'arzında muvāfık ve mutābık vāķi' olmuşdur.*
- 17 Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı, "The *Falnama* in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Farhad and Bağcı, eds., *Falnama*, p. 30, quote from the *Falname* text: "The history of past nations is a manual for people and that it is appropriate to learn a lesson ... from those who have preceded us."
- 18 I am grateful to Sara Nur Yıldız for helping me identify these names. She has found all of these names in the chronicle of Bayatī Mahmudoglu Hasan, *Cam-i cem ayin*. For Bayatī, see John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), pp. 177–79.
- 19 The poem continues: *Tīre rūzīm o siyah bakht o perīshān āwqāt/Vāy agar chashm-e 'ināyat nashavad nāzīr-e mā/ Zūd bāshad ke be dīvānegī efsāne ślavīm/ Eger īnast fusūn fusūn-e şenem sāķhīr-e mā.* "We are in dark days, black fortune and a disheveled state/ If your eye of kindness does not look upon us/ It may be quick that in madness we become a legend/ If this is magic, then our magician is the enchantment of the beloved." I am grateful to my colleague Sunil Sharma for his help with this translation.
- 20 See Emine Fetvacı, "Love in the Album of Ahmed I," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Fall 2010), pp. 37–51.
- 21 In a private conversation, Abolala Soudavar has raised the possibility that the calligraphies in this album might be sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century forgeries, since a vibrant market for the calligraphers was named in the preface. See "Forgeries: Introduction" (Abolala Soudavar) *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 10, fasc.1 (1999), pp. 90–93.
- 22 This juxtaposition might be viewed as being akin to the rhetoric of translating the *Shalīnama* into Turkish as modeled by Serpil Bağcı, "From Translated Word to Translated Image: The Illustrated Şehnāme-i Türkī Copies," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000), pp. 162–76.
- 23 See Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kānūn for the State, a Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation Française, 1992), pp. 195–216; Gülru Necipoğlu, "L'idée de décor dans les régimes de visualité islamiques," in *Purs d'écors? Arts de l'Islam, regards du XIXe siècle. Collections des Arts Décoratifs*, ed. Rémi Labrousse (Paris, 2007), pp. 10–23.
- 24 Aimée Elisabeth Froom, "A Muraqqa' for the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595): Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Mixtus 313," PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2001, pp. 196–214, 378–83.

THE GULISTĀN OF SA'DĪ ATTRIBUTED TO YĀQŪT AL-MUSTA'ŠIMĪ AND ITS MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

From the Mongols to the Mughals and Beyond

Abstract

This paper focuses on the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī that has been attributed to Yāqūt al-Musta'šimī, in the Gulistān Palace Library in Tehran. First, it discusses the attribution to Yāqūt to determine whether the manuscript is a genuine work or a forgery; then it explores the different stages of the *Gulistān*'s history. It concludes that even though it is certainly a forgery, this manuscript holds great interest, for it is most likely one of the oldest-known illustrated copies of the *Gulistān*. Dated to fourteenth-century Iran or to pre-Mughal India, its original paintings were completed or overpainted at the Mughal imperial workshop at the beginning of Jahangir's reign. Then these paintings themselves were removed, but some of them can be identified in several album pages that are scattered in various public and private collections.

MANUSCRIPTS OFTEN TELL STORIES, not only through their contents but also as objects in themselves. A prime example is the *Gulistān* (Rose Garden) of Sa'dī (died AH 691/1292 CE), number 642 in the Gulistān Palace Library (GPL) in Tehran.¹ It stands out due to several aspects: first, it is the only known copy of the *Gulistān* from Sa'dī's own lifetime (AH 668/1270 CE).² Second, it is attributed to the so-called "Cynosure of calligraphers" (*Qiblat al-kuttāb*), Yāqūt al-Musta'šimī (died AH 698/1298–99 CE), who is credited with major achievements in the history of Islamic calligraphy, notably the canonization of the so-called "six styles" in Arabic script.³ Copying his handwriting was thus a way to master the art of calligraphy, and imitating his signature both a glorifying and a lucrative business. As a result, more than 120 manuscripts have been attributed to him. Among these, the *Gulistān* also stands out as the only one in Persian. It therefore deserves careful examination to determine whether it is a very important original or a banal forgery.

During my PhD studies, I examined most of the manuscripts attributed to Yāqūt and established a set of criteria to distinguish the genuine ones from the forgeries.⁴ First, the colophon must comply with the historical information available on Yāqūt and with the codicological, paleographical, and stylistic features of the context in which he lived and worked, i.e., Bagdad at the beginning of the Ilkhanid period (AH 656–736/1258–1335 CE). Since Yāqūt was not only a calligrapher, particularly of the Koran, but also a scholar (*adīb*) and a first-rank scribe (*kātib*), the colophon must be dated to his lifetime and also be devoid of grammatical and orthographic mistakes. Moreover, it must have been copied on the same kind of paper as the rest of the manuscript and not be altered, i.e., scratched, modified, or overwritten.

The colophon of the *Gulistān* (fig. 1) is in Arabic and reads as follows:

katabahu al-‘abd al-faqīr / ilā Allah al-ghanī Yāqūt al-Musta‘īmī / fī awākhir
shahr Ramaḍān / al-mubārak min sanat thamānin / wa sittin wa sitta-
miya ḥāmidan / ‘alā ni‘amih wa muṣalliyan ‘alā / nabiyyih Muḥammad wa
ālih wa musalliman kathīrā

The slave in need of God the Wealthy, Yāqūt al-Musta‘īmī, wrote this at the end of the blessed month of Ramadan in the year 668 [mid-May 1270 CE], praising for his favors and blessing his Prophet Muhammad and his relatives and saluting a lot.

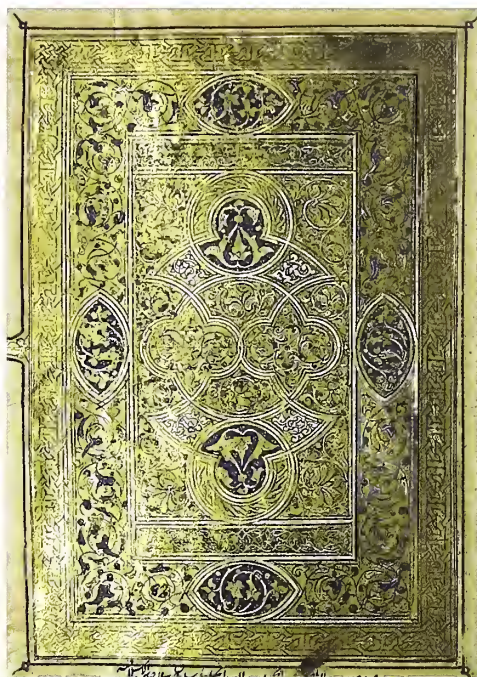
This colophon is devoid of grammatical mistakes, although one word, “Allah,” has apparently been omitted between *ḥāmidan* and *‘alā*. As a matter of fact, the praise typically reads *ḥāmidan Allah ‘alā ni‘amih* rather than *ḥāmidan ‘alā ni‘amih*. As for orthography, six hundred is spelled *sitta-miya*, with a two-dot *yā*, which seems odd since the orthodox ways of spelling one hundred are *mā’a* and *mi’a*, while *miya* seems to correspond to an oral pronunciation. Moreover, in the course of my study of the different manuscripts attributed to Yāqūt, I have identified a dozen most likely genuine ones,⁵ and in all of them, one hundred is always spelled *mā’a*, with an *alif*. Likewise, in the *Gulistān*, *‘alā* is spelled without an *alif maqṣūra*, while in the dozen most likely genuine manuscripts, it is always spelled with a *maqṣūra*. In addition, in the *Gulistān*, Yāqūt is called “the needy slave” while the likely genuine manuscripts are devoid of such epithets and signed “Yāqūt al-Musta‘īmī.”

Regarding the codicological features, the colophon occupies the verso of the last folio of the manuscript. It is more decorated than the likely genuine colophons; in fact, it is so illuminated, it is impossible to see the paper underneath. Moreover, it has creases, which may indicate that it is actually two sheets pasted together. It is written in white, outlined in black, and the loops of letters such as *‘ayn*, *fā*, and *qāf* are filled in black. The interlinear spaces are adorned with small vegetal motifs and irregular grids in black on a gilt background. Then, like in Koranic frontispieces, the main area of the composition is framed by a wide border. This is decorated with linear, spiral arabesques bearing blue, green, and red vegetal motifs on a gilt background. These arabesques are set within elongated cartouches that are interrupted on the vertical and horizontal axes by circular medallions decorated with radiant compositions of gilt vegetal motifs on a deep blue background.

The small discrepancies in the text and in the appearance of the colophon thus suggest that it is a forgery. On the other hand, the style of its illumination is very close to that of the frontispiece of a Koran dated to AH 694/1295 CE that is definitely



1



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1
Sa'di's *Gulistān*, colophon bearing the name of Yāqūt al-Musta'şimī and the date 668 AH (1270 CE). *Gulistān* Palace Library, Tehran, no. 642, p. 335. Photo by N. Ben Azzouna.

2
Koran, Yāqūt al-Musta'şimī, 694 AH (1295 CE). Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, Nurosmāniye 9, f. 1v–2r. © Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi.

by Yāqūt (fig. 2). The composition of the two illuminations is very close; both have a central field and two borders, a wide one that is divided and adorned almost in the same way, with linear spiral arabesques on a gilt background, and a thin one that is probably unfinished in the *Gulistān* and half-finished or reworked with a lattice-work in the Koran. Some of the vegetal motifs are slightly different, but the palette of the two decorations is also the same.⁶

The rest of the *Gulistān* consists of 335 pages, i.e., 168 folios, provided with new margins (the manuscript bears page numbers instead of folio numbers; I will thus refer to page numbers throughout this essay). The text-block areas measure 175 x 126 mm and the whole folios 307 x 220 mm. The text-block areas are made of two different kinds of paper. Most of the folios are of a fine, cream, rather thin paper with horizontal laid lines, twenty of them measuring around 28 mm, whereas a few folios (pp. 32–33, 46–47, 220–39, 252–91, 296, etc.) are later replacements by various hands, and the margins are of a darker and thicker paper that is flecked with gold. The original text-block areas are ruled with a *miştara*⁷ consisting of eleven lines spaced 16 mm apart. The *miştara* is applied on the front side, i.e., the verso of the right-hand side and the recto of the left-hand side of every open bifolio. Thus, even though the original folios were cut out, set in new margins and bound again, the *miştara* layout allows us to identify the original gatherings as quaternions, i.e., eight-folio gatherings, which is unusual for Bagdad, where quinions, i.e., ten-folio gatherings, were almost always the rule, as in the case of the genuine manuscripts mentioned above.

Finally, as far as the handwriting is concerned, the *Gulistān* is in *naskh*. My study of Yāqūt's genuine manuscripts in *naskh* allowed me to divide his works into two chronological phases: an early one from the AH 670s/1270s CE to the end of the AH 680s/1280s CE and a later one during the AH 690s/1290s CE.⁸ A comparison between the *Gulistān*'s script and Yāqūt's *naskh* in the AH 670s/1270s CE reveals that the handwriting in the former is very fine. Nevertheless, it looks rounder and more



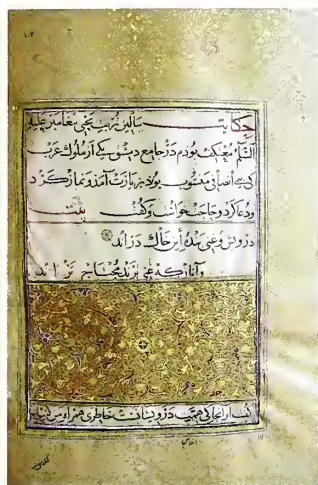
3
Sa'di's *Gulistan*. *Gulistan* Palace
Library, Tehran, no. 642, f. 1v.
Photo by N. Ben Azzouna.

fluid than Yāqūt's style at the same period. For instance, in the beginning of *bā'* and similar letters, the line slopes more to the left and is much rounder. The final *bā'*, *dāl*, as well as initial *djīm* are also often rounder and closed. Furthermore, the use of *tarwīs*⁹ is very limited. Indeed, the handwriting in the *Gulistan* is closer to Yāqūt's later style, with other features such as *ṭams*¹⁰ and the use of *dālī kāf*.

In summary, the discrepancies in the colophon, the use of quaternions instead of quinions, and the differences between the *naskh* scripts in the *Gulistan* and in Yāqūt's contemporary work indicate that the *Gulistan* is a forgery. Nonetheless, several elements suggest that it may be an early, probably a fourteenth-century copy. First, its paper is coarser and darker than the fine and light paper usually used in fifteenth-century Iranian manuscripts. Second, some of its orthographic features—notably the dotting of certain *dāls* into *dhāls*—as well as the use of *naskh* stand out; *nasta'liq* is the dominant script in fifteenth-century Persian literary copies. Finally, the style of the illumination of the colophon is clearly pre-Timurid and, in fact, is almost identical to that of the frontispiece of the genuine Koran dated AH 694/1295 CE by Yāqūt.

Another observation supports the hypothesis that the *Gulistan* may be an early or at least an archaistic copy. It is the decoration of its remaining pages. The original decorations were completely removed—unlike Yāqūt's genuine manuscripts, which further underlines that it is a forgery—but they were replaced by new ones during successive periods. The first double page (folios 1v [fig. 3] and 2r) was adorned with lavishly illuminated borders. Then, the first page (folio 1v) was provided with a *sarlawḥ*,¹¹ and thirty-seven other pages¹² (see fig. 4) were given surprisingly large, rectangular or square illuminated panels on pieces of dark-brown paper that were pasted on the lighter text-block areas. Their style indicates that these illuminated panels were added at a very late date, i.e., in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Nevertheless, their oblong or square formats recall late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Arab and Persian manuscript illustrations, which suggests that illustrations rather than illuminations were, or at least were meant to be, originally in the *Gulistan*. In each case, the text is complete, which signifies that the illustrations were not added over the text some time after its completion, but that they were original.¹³ Thus, not only can we assume that our *Gulistan* is an early or at least an archaistic copy, but also that it may be the oldest or at least one of the oldest known illustrated copies of this classic of Persian literature and book painting. Furthermore, the surviving illuminated panels allow us to reconstruct the original illustration program as follows:

- Chapter I, stories 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 32, 35, 40
- Chapter II, stories 2, 7, 11, 27, 33
- Chapter III, stories 6, 14, 19, 27 (two illustrations)



4
Sa'di's *Gulistan*. Gulistan Palace
Library, Tehran, no. 642, p. 103.
Photo by N. Ben Azzouna.

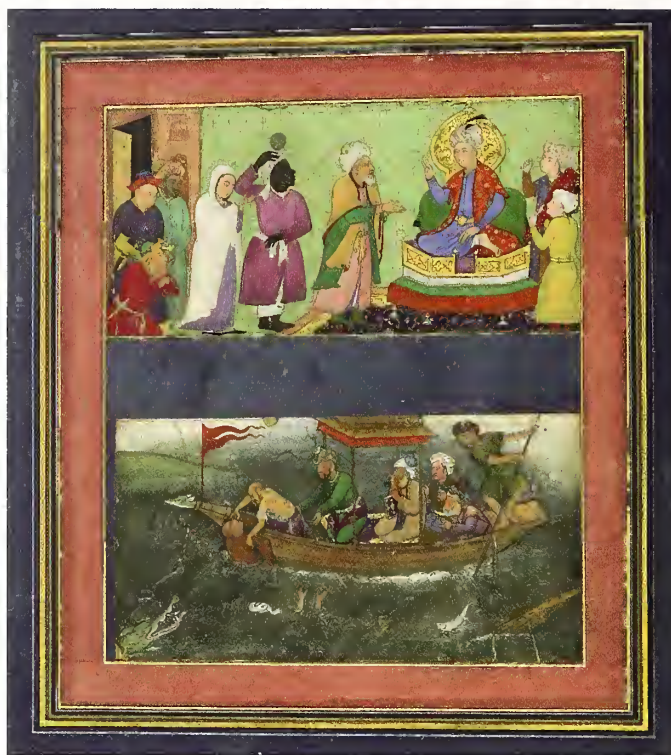
- Chapter IV, stories 10
- Chapter V, stories 4, 16, 17, 19, 20
- Chapter VI, stories 2, 9
- Chapter VII, stories 3, 12, and 16¹⁴

When and where this manuscript was produced, in fourteenth-century Iran or after a fourteenth-century Iranian model, is still an open question. Although several factors suggest a fourteenth-century Iranian origin, others point to a later date and a different place of production. For instance, the paper, calligraphy, and format of the paintings recall some fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Indian Sultanate manuscripts, such as the unique *Ni'mat-nāmah* produced in Mandu.¹⁵ Moreover, the high number (approximately forty) of the original paintings of the *Gulistan* seems inconsistent with the later development of the tradition of illustrating the *Gulistan* in Iran. As a matter of fact, the extant illustrated copies of this text from Iran usually show a few, i.e., half a dozen or a dozen, paintings, while those from India often have a richer program of illustration.¹⁶ This issue must be further investigated.¹⁷ Nevertheless, more information is available on our *Gulistan*'s subsequent transformation.

Indeed, its first double-page illuminated borders are obviously late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century Mughal illuminations. Moreover, in the margins below these illuminated borders and most of the presently illuminated, i.e., formerly illustrated panels, are the names of several well-known Mughal painters:

- Folio 1v (Nādir al-Zamān)
- Chapter I, stories 3 (Bāltshand), 4 (Narsing), 9 (Nādir al-'Aṣr Ustād Maṣṣūr), 10 (Ikhlāṣ), 13 (Pidārat), 15 (Dahnarādī), 17 ('Ināyat), 21 (Dahnarādī), 24 (Narsing), 27 (Manūhar), 28 (Mūhan), 32 (Latshman), 35 (Dawlat), 40 (Mīrzā Ghulām).
- Chapter II, stories 2 (Basāwan?), 7 (Mūhan), 11 (Basāwan?), 27 (Guvardhan), 33 (Manūhar)
- Chapter III, stories 6 (Narsing), 14 (Bishandās?), 19 ('Ināyat), 27 (Bāltshand, then Ustād Maṣṣūr)
- Chapter IV, story 10 (Nānhā?¹⁸)
- Chapter V, stories 4 (Bāltshand), 16 (Dawlat), 17 (Narsing), 19 (Mīrzā Ghulām), 20 (Guvardhan)
- Chapter VII, stories 3 (Dahnarādī?), 16 (Mūhan).

These painters were primarily active in the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. This indicates that the original copy was provided with new illuminated borders and illustrations at the end of the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar (reigned AH 963–1014/1556–1605 CE) or at the beginning of the



5

Album page bearing two illustrations from the *Gulistān*: the king, the Chinese slave girl, and the black slave (chapter I, story 40; above), and the sinking vessel with the two brothers (chapter I, story 35; below). Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, W.668, f. 36v. © 2011 Walters Art Museum.

rule of his son and successor Jahangir (reigned AH 1014–37/1605–27 CE). So far, Basāwan, Latshman, and Narsing have been known only by works dated to the reign of Akbar.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mīrzā Ghulām seems to have worked exclusively for Prince Salim,²⁰ Abū al-Ḥasan was born into the latter’s court, and both painters continued to work for him when he became Emperor Jahangir.²¹ It is, thus, more likely that our manuscript was refurbished at the beginning of Jahangir’s reign, probably in parallel with a *Bustān* that was copied in AH 1014/1605–6 CE and illustrated by many of the same painters.²² Since the titles Nādir al-Zamān (Wonder of the Time) and Nādir al-ʿAṣr (Wonder of the Age) were not given to Abū al-Ḥasan and Ustād Maṣṣūr before AH 1027–28/1618–19 CE²³, the attributions in the lower margins could not have been added before that date. Then the images produced by Jahangir’s workshop themselves were cut out before the manuscript was “restored” and given its final shape with illuminated panels, gold-flecked margins, and the binding, either in India or probably after it was taken back to Iran in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.²⁴

The illustrations by Jahangir’s workshop were certainly cut out in order to be sold or reused. Some of them, however, have survived. Fourteen dispersed paintings—already identified as being from a lost *Gulistān* and attributed to the beginning of Jahangir’s reign²⁵—can be linked, indeed, by their topic and format to our *Gulistān*. These fourteen paintings appear now on a seventeenth-century lacquer mirror case and several eighteenth- or nineteenth-century album pages, as follows:

- Three paintings on a mirror case in the David Collection in Copenhagen (Inv. no. 1/2009)²⁶
- Seven paintings pasted on three album pages in the Walters Art Museum (WAM) in Baltimore: W.668, f. 36v (fig. 5),²⁷ f. 48v (three images),²⁸ and f. 49 (two images)²⁹

- Two paintings on two album pages formerly in the Rothschild Collection in Geneva³⁰ (present location unknown)
- Two paintings on one page in a private collection in the United States³¹

These fourteen images differ in size and shape, but except for two that are still to be identified,³² they can be placed in the GPL *Gulistān* as follows:

PAINTING	STORY ILLUSTRATED	MANUSCRIPT PAGE	PREVIOUS ATTRIBUTION(S)	ATTRIBUTION IN THE MARGIN
US private collection, upper register (63 x 89 mm)	Chapter I, story 1	32 ³³	Manūhar, ³⁴ Dawlat ³⁵	
David Collection 2 (63 x 123mm)	Chapter I, story 4	42	Abū al-Ḥasan ³⁶	Narsing
WAM, W.668, f. 48v, median register (63 x 122mm)	Chapter I, story 9	101		Nādir al-ʿAṣr Ustād Maṣṣūr
W.668, f. 49, lower register (66 x 124mm)	Chapter I, story 13	107 ³⁷		Pidārat
US private collection, lower register (62 x 88mm)	Chapter I, story 32	87	Mīrzā Ghulām ³⁸	Latselman
WAM, W.668, f. 36v, lower register (66 x 124mm)	Chapter I, story 35 ³⁹	91	This painting is inscribed: “done by the slave of the court Dawlat” ⁴⁰	Dawlat
WAM, W.668, f. 36v, upper register (62 x 126mm)	Chapter I, story 40	97		Mīrzā Ghulām
David Collection 3 (65 x 126mm)	Chapter II, story 33	150	ʿĀbid ⁴¹	Manūhar
David Collection 1 (85 x 123mm)	Chapter V, story 4	225	This painting is inscribed “ <i>bandah</i> [the servant] Bāltshand” ⁴²	?
Rothschild 1 (L shape, 85 x 130mm)	Chapter VI, story 9	272		
WAM, W.668, f. 49, upper register (63 x 124mm)	Chapter VII, story 3	275 ⁴³	Abū al-Ḥasan ⁴⁴	Dahnarādī (?)
Rothschild 2 (76 x 125mm)	Chapter VII, story 16	290		Mūhan

Since the Mughal painting specialist John Seyller has argued that the three paintings that are now in the David Collection in Copenhagen may have been reworked by the court painter Murar at the beginning of the reign of Shah Jahan (AH 1037–68/1628–57 CE) so they could be reused in the lacquer mirror case,

these paintings may have been removed from the manuscript as early as the 1630s or 1640s.

In summary, the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī attributed to the Cynosure of calligraphers is definitely not a genuine manuscript from the hand of Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī. Nevertheless, it is extremely interesting as far as both literary history and art history are concerned. As a matter of fact, it was most likely produced in fourteenth-century Iran or after a fourteenth-century Iranian model in a later Indian Sultanate workshop, which makes it the oldest or at least one of the oldest known illustrated copies of this classic of Persian literature and painting. The manuscript, however, was refurbished and provided with new illuminations and illustrations at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the court painters of Emperor Jahangir. The new illustrations themselves were subsequently also removed, perhaps as early as the 1630s or 1640s. Nevertheless, fourteen of these paintings have been uncovered in a seventeenth-century mirror case and several eighteenth- or nineteenth-century album pages.

Linking the GPL *Gulistān* to these paintings thus not only sheds new light on the manuscript but also on various aspects of the Mughal paintings. As a matter of fact, when they were first published in the 1950s and early 1960s, these illustrations caused some confusion due to their unusual formats, which were interpreted as a way to evacuate the “problem” of painting landscapes and architectures by placing emphasis on figures and actions,⁴⁵ or as a feature that may have been inherited from the Sultanates period.⁴⁶ Comparing the GPL *Gulistān* to these images thus not only determines their provenance and clarifies the original illustration program to which they belonged, it also explains their format. In addition, it makes it possible to identify their topics and attributions to different hands more precisely, thus paving the way for new discussions about the manuscript, the paintings, and the careers of several Mughal painters. For all these reasons, our initial question about the value of the *Gulistān* as a very important manuscript or a banal forgery can be answered: it is a very important forgery.

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NOTES

- 1 *Gulistān-i Saʿdī bi-khaṭṭ-i Yāqūt-i Mustāʿsimī* [The *Gulistān* of Saʿdī in the handwriting of Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī], facsimile, ed. Badrī Ātābāi (Tehran, 1968).
- 2 Aḥmad Munzawī, *Fihrist-i Nuskah-hā-yi Khaṭṭ-i Fārsī* [Index of the Persian Manuscripts] (Tehran, 1969), vol. 5, p. 3602.
- 3 Thulth, Muhḥaqqaq, Tawqīʿ, Naskh, Rayḥān, and Riqāʿ; see Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 242.
- 4 Nourane Ben Azzouna, “La Production de manuscrits en Iraq et en Iran occidental à l’époque des dynasties mongoles (Les Ilkhanides et les Djalayirides [658–814/1256–1411]),” PhD diss., École pratique des hautes études, Paris, 2009), pp. 38–93, 314–23. The word “forgery” is used here to mean the opposite of “genuine.” Nevertheless, it obviously encompasses various types of non-genuine manuscripts, from student facsimiles to forgers’ deceptions; see Walter B. Denny, “Forgeries,” *The Dictionary of Art* XVI, pp. 545–46.
- 5 Nine Korans. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi (TMSK), Istanbul: E.H.76 (Martin Lings, *The Quranic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination* [Westeham 1976], pls. 24–25, and David James, *The Master Scribes: Qurʾāns of the 10th to 14th Century* [Oxford, 1992], no. 11); E.H.74 (Lings, *The Quranic Art*, pls. 26–27, and James, *The Master Scribes*, p. 60); and E.H.61 (Martin Lings, *Splendours of Qurʾān calligraphy and illumination* [Vaduz, 2005], pl. 38). Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, no. 507 (Can Kerametli and Zahir Güvemli, *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi* [The Turkish and Islamic Art Museum] [Istanbul, 1974], p. 12). Süleymaniye Library, Nurosmāniye 9 (unpublished). Mevlana Museum, Konya, Turkey, no. 15 (unpublished).
- National Museum, Tehran, no. 4277 (Lings, *The Quranic Art*, no. 23; Martin Lings and Yasin Hamid Safadi, *The Qurʾān* [London, 1976], no. 57; Blair, *Islamic calligraphy*, pp. 243–47). Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī, Mashhad, Iran, no. 120 (Aḥmad Gultshīn-Maʿānī, *Rāhnamāh-yi Gandjīnah-yi Qurʾān dar Mūzah-yi Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī-i Maslūh* [A Guide to the Collection of Qurʾān-s in the Museum of Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍawī in Mashhad] [Mashhad, 1969], no. 46; Lings, *The Quranic Art*, pl. 28; Lings and Safadi, *The Qurʾān*, no. 58; James, *The Master Scribes*, 59). Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, Arabe 6716 (Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Calligraphy* [Leyden, 1970], pl. IX-b; Muḥammad Sharīfī, *Khuṭūʿ al-maṣāḥif ‘inda al-mashāriqa wa al-maghāriba min al-qarn al-rābi‘ ilā al-qarn al-āshir al-hijrī* [The Qurʾānic calligraphies in the East and the West (of the Islamic World) from the Fourth to the Tenth Century after the Hīdjrā] [Algiers, 1982], pp. 141–45, figs. 27–28; François Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran: Du Maghreb à l’Insulinde* [Paris, 1985], no. 523, pl. XXVI-A; *Splendeur et majesté, Corans de la Bibliothèque Nationale* [Paris, 1987], no. 29; *L’Art du livre arabe, du manuscrit au livre d’artiste* [Paris, 2001], no. 43). A copy of *Diwān al-Ḥādīra* in the Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofia 3933, Istanbul (unpublished). A book of prayers (*Adʿiyat al-Ayyām al-Sabʿa* [Prayers of the Seven Days]) in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, no. 4237 (unpublished). And probably a compendium of proverbs in the British Library, Add. 23475 (unpublished; Ben Azzouna, “La Production de manuscrits,” pp. 38–93).
- 6 The style of the illumination of the AH 694/1295 CE Koran, which is signed by Muḥammad b. al-Sāʿatī, is notable for its use of linear spiral arabesques on a gilt

- background also recognizable in three other manuscripts: another genuine Koran by Yāqūt (Istanbul, TSMK, E.H.61, dated AH 696/1297 CE); the fifteenth *juz'* (section) of a thirty-volume Koran attributed to Yāqūt (London: Khalili Collection, Qur. 29 [James, *The Master Scribes*, no. 11]); and the first *juz'* of another thirty-volume Koran produced in Bagdad for Sultan ʿUjdjāytū (reigned AH 703–16/1304–16 CE) (Leipzig, Albertina, K. 1, f. 5 [David James, *Qurʾāns of the Mamlūks* (London, 1988), no. 40]).
- 7 A *miṣṭara* is a ruling device consisting of a cardboard or a wooden board upon which are taut threads that correspond to the text-block frames and base lines.
- 8 Ben Azzouna, "La Production de manuscrits," pp. 38–93.
- 9 From *ra's* (head): a stroke placed at the beginning of a downward line, such as *alif*, head of *bā*, head of *dāl*, etc.
- 10 Filling in certain letters such as median 'ayn and *nīm*.
- 11 Illuminated heading.
- 12 Pages 37, 42, 59, 66, 70, 73, 80, 82, 86, 87, 91, 97, 101, 103, 106, 110, 114, 121, 123, 150, 173, 179, 182, 200, 204, 215, 225, 243, 246, 250, 251, 258, 265, 272, 274, 287, 290.
- 13 There are exceptions, but they only confirm this observation. On p. 86, the left halves of lines 5 and 6 are missing. The space illuminated is thus too narrow to contain an illustration. The illumination was thus probably started on the recto, but that mistake was corrected and the illumination was completed on the right halves of lines 3 to 6 of the verso of the same folio (p. 87). Likewise, on p. 250, lines 6 to 9 of the text are missing, but an illumination was executed mistakenly on the recto and exactly in the same place on the verso of the same folio (p. 251). Finally, on p. 265, two lines of text are missing, but the other ones are unusually spaced so that it is likely that the painting was not added over any of the original text.
- 14 This illustration program is incomplete. Most of the illustrations were numbered, but parallel to the thirty-six extant panels are numbers from 1 to 42. In addition, a note on the last page of the manuscript mentions forty-three illustrations (*waraq-i muṣawwar*), which suggests that seven paintings are missing, most likely four at the beginning of the manuscript—illustration I-4 is in fact numbered 6—and three between III-27(2), numbered 29, and V-16, numbered 34. Illustrations I-3 and IV-10 are not numbered.
- 15 India Office Library, London, IO Islamic 149 / ETHE 2775 (Norah M. Titley, *The Ni'matnāma Manuscript of the Sultans of Mandu: The Sultan's Book of Delights* (London, 2005); Eloïse Brac de La Perrière, *L'Art du Livre dans l'Inde des Sultanats* (Paris, 2008), n. 16, pls. 25–26).
- 16 I thank Lamia Balafrej, who is carrying out research on the illustrated manuscripts of the *Gulistan*, for this information.
- 17 The manuscript's text does not always match classical editions of the *Gulistan*; the one used here is that of Muḥammad 'Alī Furūghī (Tehran, 2009). A careful textual analysis of the GPL manuscript in comparison to other early copies would certainly be informative about the history of this manuscript as well as the text of the *Gulistan*.
- 18 I am not certain about the accuracy of some of the names, notably Nānhā "Zunnār-Dār."
- 19 Som Prakash Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work: A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (Aligarh, Oxford, 1994).
- 20 The birth name of Emperor Jahangir.
- 21 John Seyller, "The Walters Art Museum Diwan of Amir Hasan Dihlawi and Salim's atelier at Allahabad," *Arts of Mughal India. Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield (London and Ahmedabad, India, 2004), p. 108.
- 22 Terence McInerney, "Three Paintings by Abu'l Hasan in a Manuscript of the Bustan of Sa'di," in *Arts of Mughal India*, pp. 81–94.
- 23 Verma, *Mughal Painters*, pp. 47, 261.
- 24 Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indian and Iranian illumination and bookbinding are still insufficiently known to propose a more precise attribution for these restorations.
- 25 Basil Gray, "Painting," in *The Art of India and Pakistan*, ed. Leigh Welch (London, 1950), pp. 153, 155; Richard Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections* (New Delhi, 1961), pl. 10; Stuart C. Welch, *The Art of Mughal India* (New York, 1963), p. 71; Ernst Grube, *The World of Islam* (London, 1966), pl. 100; B. W. Robinson, *Persian and Mughal Art* (London, 1976), no. 89, pl. 204; Asok Kumar Das, *Mughal Painting During Jahangir's Time* (Calcutta, 1978), p. 94; Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Grand Mogul: Imperial Painting in India, 1600–1660* (Williamstown, 1978), p. 66; *Trésors de l'Islam* (Geneva, 1985), no. 138; B. N. Goswami and Eberhard Fischer, *Wonders of a Golden Age: Painting at the Court of the Great Mughals* (Zurich, 1987), no. 79; John Seyller, "Two Mughal Mirror Cases," *Journal of the David Collection*, 3 (2010), pp. 131–43.
- 26 Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, pp. 131–43, figs. 1–2 (David Collection 1), figs. 6–7 (David Collection 2), and figs. 9–10 (David Collection 3).
- 27 Gray, *Painting*, p. 155, no. 695, pl. 133; Das, *Mughal Painting*, p. 96; Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 16.

- 28 Gray, *Painting*, p. 153, no. 683; Ettinghausen, *Paintings*, pl. 10; Das, *Mughal Painting*, pp. 95–96; Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 17.
- 29 Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 18; Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, fig. 8; <http://poetryprayer.thewalters.org/poetry/gulistan/> (accessed February 1, 2011)
- 30 Robinson, *Persian and Mughal Art*, and *Trésors de l'Islam*, no. 138 (henceforth labeled Rothschild 1); Robinson, *Persian and Mughal Art*, and Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 20 (Rothschild 2).
- 31 Stuart C. Welch, "Early Mughal Miniature Paintings from Two Private Collections Shown at the Fogg Art Museum," *Ars Orientalis* 3 (1959), p. 142, pl. 11, fig. 18; Welch, *The Art of Mughal India*, pl. 25; Das, *Mughal Painting*, pp. 94–96.
- 32 W.668, f. 48v, upper and lower registers (respectively 63 x 122 and 47 x 122 mm).
- 33 This entire folio was replaced.
- 34 Welch, *Early Mughal Miniature Paintings*, p. 142; Welch, *The Art of Mughal India*, p. 71.
- 35 Das, *Mughal Painting*, p. 96.
- 36 Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, p. 137.
- 37 The illuminated panel that replaced this illustration was pasted back to front.
- 38 Welch, *The Art of Mughal India*, p. 71.
- 39 This painting was previously identified as an illustration of chapter I, story 7 (Ettinghausen, *Paintings*).
- 40 Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 16; Verma, *Mughal Painters*, p. 129.
- 41 Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, pp. 141–43.
- 42 Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, p. 131.
- 43 Pasted back to front.
- 44 Beach, *The Grand Mogul*, no. 18; Seyller, *Two Mughal Mirror Cases*, pp. 137–39.
- 45 Das, *Mughal Painting*, p. 95.
- 46 Ettinghausen, *Paintings*.

MUGHAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE RAMPUR *JĀMIʿ AL-TAVĀRĪKH*

1

Birth of Ghazan Khan, from a manuscript of the *jāmiʿ al-tavārīkh* by Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318). India, Mughal, AH 1004/1596 CE. Watercolor on paper. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, Jerome Wheelock Fund, 1935.12. Photograph courtesy Worcester Art Museum.

Abstract

This article explores late sixteenth-century Mughal attitudes towards Persian illustrated manuscripts of earlier provenance, taking as a case study the *Jāmiʿ al-tavārīkh* (Compendium of chronicles) in the Raza Library in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh. Copied in Tabriz in the fourteenth century, the Rampur *Jāmiʿ al-tavārīkh* was embellished at one or more courts of Iran and Central Asia during the fifteenth and possibly sixteenth centuries before it finally ended up in the hands of Akbar's artists during the 1590s. The manuscript thus functions as a palimpsest, bearing text in a fourteenth-century hand and eighty-two paintings dating from a span of almost three centuries. Some Mughal-period compositions in the manuscript even incorporate and build around fragments of paintings dating from the fifteenth century and perhaps earlier. In focusing on these works in particular, this article considers how Mughal painters constructed a distinctive artistic idiom upon and through layers of the past.

IT WOULD NOT BE AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY that the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605) was possessed of an historical impulse. During his nearly fifty-year tenure on the throne (reigned 1556–1605), he commissioned multiple dynastic histories in Persian, including the *Akbarnāma*, a chronicle of his own reign; the *Tārīkh-i khāndān-i timūriyya*, a history of the Timurid lineage up to the Mughals; and the *Tārīkh-i alfi*, a history of the first Muslim millennium that begins with the Prophet Muḥammad's death and concludes with Akbar's reign. Akbar also ordered the translation of Arabic- and Sanskrit-language histories into Persian. Even the memoirs of Babur (1483–1530), the founder of the dynasty and Akbar's grandfather, found a new life in the official court language.¹

Many of these works were lavishly and copiously illustrated in a recognizably Mughal idiom that, as a number of scholars have noted, departs significantly from the Timurid, Safavid, Jain, and Sultanate painting traditions to which Akbar's artists were heir.² This divergence from established and no doubt familiar modes of representation and pictorial cycles may be explained in part by the nature of the texts themselves. Many of them, such as the *Tārīkh-i alfi*, had been only recently composed. Thus Akbar's artists had no codified program of illustration to which to turn.³ The painters charged with illustrating the *Razmnāma* (Book of war), a Persian rendering of the Mahabharata produced at Akbar's court in the early 1580s, found themselves in a similar predicament. Although the sacred epic predated the Mughals by many centuries, an illustrative program had not been established in the form of a codex. With no immediate models at hand, Akbar's artists were compelled to compose a corpus of narrative images anew and afresh, often with spectacular results.⁴



2

2

Birth of Ghazan Khan, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, p. 268, here dated to 15th or 16th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 133 x 270 mm. Raza Library, Rampur. Photograph from Barbara Schmitz and Ziyaud-Din A. Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings and Illustrated Manuscripts in the Raza Library*, Rampur, pl. 259.

But what about cases where precedents did exist and where prototypes were available? A *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* (Compendium of chronicles) dated AH 1004/1596 CE (Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran, and dispersed to other collections) presents just such a problem.⁵ Although the royal library possessed an earlier illustrated copy of this text (Raza Library, Rampur, P.1820), Mughal court artists chose to envision history through their own distinctive artistic framework, dispensing entirely with the model even when there was an overlap in subject matter (compare, e.g., figs. 1 and 2).⁶ What drove this decision? Further, what does this impulse towards “the new” say about Mughal attitudes about the past?

This older illustrated *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, today housed in the Raza Library in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, offers a unique framework through which to explore some of these questions. The manuscript bears paintings executed at the Mughal court during the 1590s, as well as paintings dating from the sixteenth, fifteenth, and possibly fourteenth centuries (figs. 3 and 4). In some cases, images from two different periods are combined on a single page (fig. 5).⁷ The Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* is a fascinating testimony to artistic reuse; it is also, however, in a state of disarray. A full codicological study of the manuscript remains to be done; my comments here are preliminary and shall remain focused primarily on establishing a rough timeline for the production of a select number of the illustrations. Conclusions drawn from this exercise indicate the Mughal-period paintings in the Rampur manuscript were painted in an idiom that is distinguished from—rather than imitative of—older exemplars. Akbar’s painters may have done this deliberately because they saw artistic style as a kind of historical imprint or trace. By including their own distinctive images into the Rampur manuscript, they sought to insert their patron and his family into an esteemed Mongol lineage, while at the same time they underscored Akbar’s role as a *mujaddid* (renewer of faith) who would usher in a new age.⁸

The Rampur manuscript was copied in Persian, in *naskh* script, probably during the second half of the fourteenth century. It draws from the *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*’s first volume, the history of the Mongol rulers, beginning with the Qipchaq princes and ending with the birth of Ghazan Khan.⁹ The manuscript’s corpus of images—eighty-two paintings in total—poses a challenge. They are stylistically and temporally disparate, and their state of preservation varies, which may explain in part why the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* had been relatively neglected by Mughal scholars until recently. Barbara Schmitz and Ziyaud-Din A. Desai’s 2006 catalogue of



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Enthronement scene, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, p. 66, 1590s. Opaque watercolor on paper, 390 x 270 mm. Raza Library, Rampur. Photograph by author.



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Enthronement of Buraq Khan, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, p. 58, 15th or 16th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 202 x 270 mm. Raza Library, Rampur. Photograph by author.

the Mughal and Persian paintings and illustrated manuscripts in the Rampur Raza Library ameliorated this situation.¹⁰ According to Schmitz's calculations, the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* was copied and furnished with a select number of illustrations in the mid- or later part of the fourteenth century in Iran. She attributes a second painting campaign to the Herat court of the Timurid prince Sulṭān-Ḥusayn Mīrzā (1438–1506), i.e., circa 1470 to 1490. A third and final phase of illustration, Schmitz posits, can be attributed to the patronage of the Mughal emperor Akbar. The author dates these paintings to circa 1590 to 1595.

Many of Schmitz's attributions are fairly straightforward. More problematic is a group of paintings that Schmitz describes as being in a "Mughal historicizing style," which she also dates to circa 1590 to 1595 (figs. 2 and 6). While these works appear to date from a single phase of production, as is evidenced by the similarities in facial and body types as well as by the presence of a common type of male head-dress, they bear no resemblance to the more recognizably Mughal additions to the manuscripts (compare figs. 3 and 6). Why would Akbar's artists execute paintings in two different historicized styles, one clearly in a Mughal mode, the other bearing no resemblance to anything known to have come out of the royal workshop at that time? Further, if these paintings were indeed produced at the Mughal court, why is there so little compositional overlap in images depicting the same subjects in the 1596 *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*?

In fact, these "historicized" paintings seem to share a closer formal relationship with paintings produced in Tabriz and Herat during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than with Mughal painting of the 1590s. The double-page enthronement scenes, for example, clearly echo *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* compositions found in the Diez



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Enthronement of Temür Öljeitü,
Jāmi' al-tavārikh, p. 152, 15th or 16th
century, with Mughal additions of
1590s. Opaque watercolor and gold
on paper, 388 x 270 mm. Raza Library,
Rampur. Photograph by author.

Albums (Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, Mss. Diez A fols. 70–72) and in Hazine 2153 in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul.¹¹

Some of the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* paintings also find a curious parallel in early fifteenth-century Timurid manuscript painting, in what has been dubbed the so-called historical style.¹² For example, the enthronement scene in an anthology dated AH 813/1410 CE (Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, L.A. 161, fol. 260v) and made for Iskandar Sulṭān (1384–1415) in Shiraz clearly recalls images of similar subjects in the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*.¹³ A compelling link is also found in the illustrative program of a *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Supp. Pers. 1113) that Francis Richard has convincingly attributed to the patronage of the Timurid prince Bāysunghur (1397–1433) at Herat.¹⁴ Indeed, the Rampur birth scene clearly seems to follow the Paris painting of the same subject, or vice versa, with the mother, wet nurse, astrologers, and attendants depicted in strikingly similar poses (figs. 2 and 7). There is, moreover, an obvious formalistic connection between the two manuscripts' representations of the siege of Baghdad, which also evidently share a relationship with a depiction of the same scene in one of the Diez Albums.¹⁵

A third *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, now housed in the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta (Ms. D31), finds so many links with the Rampur manuscript—in terms of composition and even folio size—that it is difficult to believe the two were not once housed in the same royal collection-workshop. In some cases, a nearly one-to-one relationship exists between the images.¹⁶ Dating the Calcutta manuscript is another matter altogether. In an article written in 1954, Basil Gray proposed a date some-



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Enthronement scene, *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, p. 70, here dated to 15th or 16th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 392 x 310 mm. Raza Library, Rampur. Photograph by author.

where in the late fourteenth century, or at least prior to the Bibliothèque nationale *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*.¹⁷ Barbara Brend has more recently suggested it was produced in the mid-sixteenth century, perhaps at the court of Akbar or that of his father, Humayun (1508–1556).¹⁸

To complicate the issue further, a *Tavārikh-i guzīda-i nusratnāma* (Selected histories of the book of victory) (British Library, London, Or. 3222) that was probably copied and illustrated in Transoxiana during the 1560s also shares an uncanny relationship with some of the “historicized” illustrations in the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*.¹⁹ The manner of rendering headgear, figures, and thrones in the British Library *Tavārikh-i guzīda-i nusratnāma*, for example, finds an echo in some of the Rampur manuscript’s paintings.²⁰ This correspondence between the two manuscripts compels consideration of the possibility that some portion of the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* was illustrated in an archaizing mode, either in Samarqand or Bukhara, during the mid-sixteenth century.²¹ This tantalizing line of inquiry warrants further investigation that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.

Unraveling the complex web of relations among the Rampur, London, Calcutta, Paris, and Lisbon manuscripts, moreover, remains to be done. I raise the issue of their association primarily to demonstrate that the “historicized” paintings in question belong to an artistic tradition concerned with imitation (from Iran or Central Asia, probably dating from the late fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century), and as such the works stand apart from late sixteenth-century Mughal frameworks of image-making.



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Birth of Ghazan Khan, *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, fol. 210v, 1420s.
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Supp. Pers. 1113.
Photograph courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Several scholars have raised the issue of repetition and imitation in manuscript painting from the Timurid and Safavid courts.²² Regarding Persian albums of paintings, drawings, and calligraphies, David J. Roxburgh writes: “Creativity in calligraphy and depiction involved the recreation of models and depended on the practitioner’s ability to assimilate and synthesize a series of performances. There was no anxiety of influence.... The viewer’s reception of any calligraphy, painting, or drawing—no less than for poetry—involved the anticipation of ancestry, even if specific models could not be recalled in visual memory.”²³ The Persian art of depiction was thus, in a sense, always palimpsestic. This interest in the imitation of older models is evident not only in mid-sixteenth-century Safavid albums but also in manuscripts made for Timurid princes in Shiraz, Herat, and Samarqand during the fifteenth century.

At the Mughal court during the 1590s, on the other hand, the production and appreciation of images were, to a great degree, predicated upon the marked expansion of a known visual corpus.²⁴ Whereas the Persian court painting traditions conceived the manuscript page as a frame or anchor to contain discrete, codified pictorial units drawn from a relatively finite vocabulary of images, the Mughal visual lexicon was potentially endless, expanded indefinitely by the rise of a descriptive mode of depiction that privileged unique physiognomic likenesses and depictions of contemporary and near-contemporary events. This distinction between Persian and Mughal painting practices suggests these traditions were not just stylistically distinct but were even systemically different, informed by contrasting attitudes towards the function of images and the problem of vision. Certainly, as Eleanor Sims has shown, Mughal artists in the sixteenth century drew inspiration for compositional formulas from earlier materials, especially illustrated Timurid manuscripts, but one-to-one copying is rare.²⁵ The Mughal case, moreover, evinces another kind of approach towards models and precedents, one in which the materials of the past were treated as traces of a historical moment, intrinsically distinct from the present. In this artistic system, imitation did not necessarily carry the weight that it did at the Safavid and Timurid courts.

Many of the Mughal paintings in the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, even when executed in a vaguely historicizing mode, depart both stylistically and compositionally from the older images in the same manuscript (compare figs. 3 and 6). The illustrations in the 1596 *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* likewise diverge from models that would have been available in the Rampur manuscript (see figs. 1 and 2). At the same time, Akbar’s artists left many of the Rampur manuscript’s older paintings relatively unaltered. This comes as a bit of a surprise. As John Seyller and others have demonstrated, court artists were actively engaged in repainting and augmenting pre- and early Mughal illustrations and narrative cycles, with the Cleveland *Ṭūṭīnāma*

(Tales of the parrot) and the so-called Princes of the House of Timur in the British Museum, London, being perhaps the most well studied examples.²⁶

Manuscripts illustrated during the Timurid period were not wholly excluded from this treatment. At Akbar's behest, two paintings were added to Muḥammad Jūkī's *Shāhnāma* (Book of kings) of circa 1444–45 (Royal Asiatic Society, London, Pers Ms. 239).²⁷ The *Khāmsa* (Quintet) of Mīr 'Alī Shīr Navā'ī (1441–1501) (Royal Library, Windsor Castle, Ms. A.8), which was copied by Sulṭān 'Alī of Mashhad (1442–circa 1519) in Herat in AH 897/1492 CE and then had paintings added in Bukhara during the mid-sixteenth century, was similarly augmented with overpainting and illustrations, including a Last Judgment and a picnicking scene, in circa 1605 under the direction of Akbar's son and successor, Jahangir (reigned 1605–27).²⁸ These examples are qualitatively different from the case of the *Tūḡīnāma*. While the Timurid manuscripts may have been augmented in places (sixteenth-century paintings from Bukhara, for example, were not exempt from overpainting), their fifteenth-century features were, in large part, left untouched, thus preserving their original state.²⁹ This more conservative approach to the illustrated book is perhaps best exemplified by Sulṭān-Husayn Mīrzā's *Ẓafarnāma* (Book of victory) of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, the flyleaves of which bear the seals of both Akbar and Jahangir. Its six double-page miniatures received no further retouching at the Mughal court, nor were any paintings added to the manuscript.³⁰

The early fourteenth-century Arabic-language *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* may provide an additional link between the Mongol Ilkhans and the Mughals. Sheila Blair conjectures that this now-dispersed manuscript made its way into the Mughal royal library, perhaps during the reign of Akbar. Blair's hypothesis rests not on the existence of Mughal seals or autographs (the manuscript is missing its first and last pages) but on the later addition of page numbers as well as Persian glosses next to and on top of many of the illustrations, a practice associated with the Mughal court of the late sixteenth into the seventeenth century.³¹ Like the *Ẓafarnāma*, the Arabic copy of the *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* shows no signs of Mughal overpainting dating from the late sixteenth century.

This variability in the reception of illustrated manuscripts may be explained in large part by the historical nature of the materials. Descended from both Timurid and Mongol stock, the Mughals celebrated their lineage, stressing in particular their relationship to the famed ruler Timur (1336–1405), in order to legitimize dynastic claims. In addition to manuscripts, they also collected gems and jades known to have a Timurid provenance. Into these rubies and emeralds, Akbar and Jahangir—as well as their successors—had their names inscribed next to those of esteemed Timurid forebears, a practice analogous to their marking of the flyleaves of Timurid manuscripts with royal seals and records of inspections. Both of these

inscriptional acts provided a means to mark physical presence and underscore a genealogical proximity.³² Augmenting these same manuscripts with Mughal paintings served a similar purpose by imprinting the prized, historical object with distinctively contemporary traces. Thus, by supplementing what were likely perceived to be Timurid and possibly earlier Mongol paintings with new iterations, Akbar's artists literally inserted the Mughals into a revered history. Historical continuity is demonstrated not so much through stylistic or formal affinities as through the shared use—and evidence of shared use—of the same objects.

The question of overpainting in the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* still requires further exploration. Scientific analysis may reveal that some of the full-page Mughal additions were executed on top of late fourteenth- or fifteenth-century images. Even if this is the case—and this remains to be shown—other examples in the manuscript indicate Mughal artists were less interested in covering up older paintings than in employing them as points of comparison (see figs. 5 and 8). In a Mughal-period illustration of Temür Öljeitü's court, for example, the artist(s) incorporated an older depiction of Mongol figures into the composition, as if to draw attention to some intrinsic difference between the two modes of representation (fig. 5). In style and type, the image of the Mongol couple recalls similar depictions from Diez Album A (fol. 71, S.63).³³ The truncated, cropped appearance of the Rampur image suggests it, like the couples in the Diez Album, may have originally operated as a discrete entity, enclosed by a gold and colored ruling.³⁴ At the Mughal court during the 1590s, however, the stand-alone image was incorporated into a larger narrative composition.

The figures, however, have not been fully integrated into that larger composition. Although a faint sketch suggests one of the Mughal artists considered painting a background around the Mongol figures, this project never came to fruition. Instead, the older image—untouched and left in its original state—appears to hover within the compositional space, its crisp outlines and spare palette starkly visible against the colorful and tonal Mughal surround. Far from attempting to elide such discrepancies, the Mughal artists in these two instances instead chose to make these very differences a primary focus. Again, the Mughal painting practice of the late sixteenth century departs significantly from the Persian. Contrast and disjunction, rather than imitation, figured as foundational principles.³⁵ In this way, Mughal artists inserted themselves into a historical lineage, not through imitation but by underscoring the very qualities that differentiated their own work from that of the past—but to what end?

The historical nature of the text and its illustrations is certainly significant. As opposed to a poetic work, such as the *Khāmsa* of Nizāmī (1141–1209) or even the *Shāhnāma*, the *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, like a work such as Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's



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Enthronement scene, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, p. 32, 15th or 16th century, with Mughal additions of 1590s. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 395 x 271 mm. Raza Library, Rampur. Photograph by author.

Zafarnāma, chronicled a historical dynasty of the not-so-distant past, a dynasty that was an ancestor to the Mughals. This may explain why these older images in the Rampur manuscript were preserved, especially if it was believed the depictions themselves dated from an earlier, fourteenth-century Ilkhanid moment. Many scholars have observed that descriptive painting—portraiture and studies of flora and fauna, for example—came to figure centrally at the Mughal court, especially during the later decades of Akbar's reign. An accurate likeness was not the sole objective; equally important was that the depiction had been taken from life. The descriptive image was thus understood as a document of a real encounter. I would suggest, then, that these older images in the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* were approached in a similar manner, as indices of a historical encounter. The fact that the paintings depicted esteemed ancestors of the Mughals made them even more poignant.

While Mughal artists historicized their additions to the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* to some extent, their larger project was predicated upon evoking contrasts with earlier paintings in the manuscript. By doing so, they emphasized the unique historicity of each act of depiction, serving, in a way, to underscore the contemporaneity or "newness" of the Mughal artistic idiom. This practice may find its corollary, or even its impetus, in the millenarian tone that colored Akbar's reign to such a degree that the *Tārīkh-i alfi* even proclaimed him to be the *Mujaddid-i*

alf-i thānī (Renewer of the second millennium).³⁶ In this way, the Rampur *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* presented Mughal artists with a unique opportunity to convey in artistic terms the role of their patron as the reviver of Islam and the herald of a new millennial cycle. At the same time, in the process of pairing older and modern paintings (both from folio to folio and on the same page), Akbar’s artists made a visual argument *connecting* the Mughal present to a Timurid and Mongol past.³⁷ Indeed, this was also an act of emulation, but one achieved through subtle and not-so-subtle juxtapositions rather than through imitation and repetition. With its range of image types, the Rampur *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* manuscript as a whole tells the story of shifts in artistic practice and, as such, serves as a register of how images generate meaning for both practitioners and patrons.

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NOTES

- 1 The early fifteenth-century Timurid courts also saw a rise in the production of histories and genealogies, a trend that Akbar's own initiatives appear to echo. See John E. Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (1987), pp. 81–108; and David J. Roxburgh, *Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 130–32.
- 2 The development of a Mughal style of painting during the sixteenth century has been the subject of a number of art historical studies. For a range of differing opinions and approaches, see Pramod Chandra, *The Tuti-nama of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Graz: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1976); Milo Cleveland Beach, *Early Mughal Painting* (Cambridge: Published for the Asia Society by Harvard University Press, 1987); Priscilla P. Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), pp. 166–81; John Seyller, "Overpainting in the Cleveland Tuti-nama," *Artibus Asiae* 52, no. 1–2 (1992), pp. 283–318; *Humayun's Garden Party: Princes of the House of Timur and Early Mughal Painting*, ed. Sheila Canby (Bombay: Marg, 1994); Aboulala Soudavar, "Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition," *Iran* 37 (1999), pp. 49–66; and John Seyller et al., *The Adventures of Hamza* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2002).
- 3 The degree to and manner by which pictorial cycles in manuscripts became codified, and the role that such programs played in the production of later illustrative projects, deserves further examination, but it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.
- 4 On the illustrative program of the circa 1582–86 *Razmnāma* (Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II City Palace Museum, Jaipur) and its relationship to other Mughal *Razmnāmas* of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see John Seyller, "Model and Copy: The Illustration of Three 'Razmnāma' Manuscripts," *Archives of Asian Art* 38 (1985), pp. 37–66; and Asok Kumar Das, "Notes on Four Illustrations of the Birla *Razmnāma* and their Counterparts in other *Razmnāma* Manuscripts," in *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill et al. (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2004), pp. 67–79.
- 5 The bulk (ninety-eight illustrations) of the 1596 *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* remains in the Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran (no. 2254); individual paintings previously removed from the manuscript can be found in museum and library collections in Europe and North America. For a selection of illustrations from the Tehran portion, see Hana Křížková and Jiří Marek, *The Jenghiz Khan Miniatures from the Court of Akbar the Great*, trans. Olga Kuthanová (London: Spring Books, 1963), as well as *Golestan Palace Library: A Portfolio of Miniature Paintings and Calligraphy* (Tehran: Zarin and Simin Books, 2000), pp. 141–53; and for a preliminary list of dispersed paintings from the manuscript, see Milo Cleveland Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (1981; revised and expanded, Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2012), p. 82.
- 6 Interestingly, the pictorial cycles of imperial copies of the *Bāburnāma*—which, like the *Razmnāma*, had only recently been composed (or more accurately, rendered into Persian from

- the original Chaghatai)—do in fact share a close relationship to each other, a point that Seyller attributes to the “dynastic and political importance” of these manuscripts (“Model and Copy,” p. 50). One would assume that the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* was similarly significant for Akbar, and yet his artists elected to maintain a distance between their own illustrations to this text and those available in the earlier Rampur manuscript. On the pictorial cycles of imperial *Bāburnāma* manuscripts, see Ellen Smart, “Paintings from the *Baburnama*: A Study of 16th Century Mughal Historical Manuscript Illustration,” PhD diss., University of London, 1977; and Smart, “Yet Another Illustrated Akbari *Baburnama* Manuscript,” in *Facets of Indian Art: A Symposium held at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. Robert Skelton et al. (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1987), pp. 105–15.
- 7 I would like to thank David J. Roxburgh for reminding me of a parallel practice of “layering” in Ilkhanid manuscripts collected by the Timurids, e.g., Hazine 1653 and Hazine 1654. See Richard Ettinghausen, “Some Paintings in Four Istanbul Albums,” *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954), pp. 91–103; Güner İnal, “Some Miniatures of the Jami al-Tawarikh in Istanbul, Topkapı Museum, Hazine Library no. 1654,” *Ars Orientalis* 5 (1963), pp. 163–75; and Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, chapter 3, especially pp. 130–47.
 - 8 I have examined the question of artistic agency at the Mughal court during this period, and especially during the early seventeenth century, in “The Emperor’s Eye and the Painter’s Brush: The Rise of the Mughal Court Artist, ca. 1546–1627,” PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011.
 - 9 The *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* was initially conceived as a history of the Mongols. Its author, Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl-Allāh Hamadānī (1247–1318), began the work at the behest of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304), the ruler of the Ilkhanate in Tabriz. Rashīd al-Dīn later expanded the text under Ghazan Khan’s successor, Öljeitü (r. 1304–16). In its completed form (no copy of which is known to exist today), the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* comprised four volumes. The first covered the reigns of the Mongol rulers, beginning with Genghis Khan and ending with the death of Ghazan Khan. The second dealt with the reign of Öljeitü up to the year 1310 and included a world history of the non-Mongols of Eurasia. The third was a genealogy of the Arabs, Jews, Mongols, Europeans, and Chinese, and the fourth volume was a geographical compendium. It was the author’s intention that the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* be copied in both Arabic and Persian every six months. How many manuscripts were in fact produced remains in question. Rashīd al-Dīn was executed in 1318, and his living quarters were subsequently plundered. Today, only portions of the first three volumes of Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* survive, while no copies of the fourth volume are known to exist. The earliest known copy of the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* is a fragmentary Arabic manuscript divided between the Edinburgh University Library (Arabic Ms. 20) and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection (MSS 727). Executed between 1306 and 1314 in Tabriz, the two fragments cover sections of volume two, from the pre-Islamic Persian dynasties to the Ghaznavids (Arabic Ms. 20), who ruled most of Khwarazm from 975 to 1187; and (MSS 727) the histories of Islam, China, India, and in small part, the Jews. For a comprehensive analysis of this early, fragmentary *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh*, see Sheila S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Din’s Illustrated History of the World* (London: Nour Foundation, 1995).
 - 10 Barbara Schmitz and Ziyaud-Din A. Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings and Illustrated Manuscripts in the Raza Library, Rampur* (New Delhi: Rampur Raza Library and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2006), pp. 171–79.
 - 11 On the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* images in Diez Albums folios 70–72, see M. Ş. Ipşiroğlu, *Saray-Alben: Diez’sche Klebebände aus den Berliner Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 17–18; Blair, *Compendium of Chronicles*, pp. 93–98; David J. Roxburgh, “Heinrich Friedrich von Diez and his eponymous Albums: MSS. Diez A, fols. 70–74,” *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), pp. 112–36; Karin Rührdanz, “Illustrationen zu Rašīd al-dīns *Tārīḫ-i Mubārak-i Ġāzānī* in den Berliner Diez-Alben,” in *L’Iran face à la domination mongole, études réunies et présentées*, ed. Denise Aigle (Paris, 1997), pp. 295–306; Stefano Carboni and Linda Komaroff, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), cat. nos. 17–32; and Julia Gonnella and Christoph Rauch, eds., *Heroische Seiten: Tausend Jahr persischer Buch der Könige* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 2011), cat. nos. 18–32.
- The *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh* images in Hazine 2153 have been discussed by Beyhan Karamağarali, “Camii’t-Tevarih’in bilinmeyen bir nüshasına ait dört minyatür (Four miniatures from an unknown copy of the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārīkh*),” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 2 (1966–68), pp. 70–86; Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı, *Topkapı Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. J. M. Rogers (Boston: Little Brown, 1986), nos. 43–44; and Blair, *Compendium of Chronicles*, pp. 93–98.
- 12 Richard Ettinghausen, “An Illuminated Manuscript of Hafiz-i Abru in Istanbul,

Part I," *Kunst des Orients* 2 (1955), pp. 30–44. For a reassessment of this term, see Roxburgh, *Persian Album*, pp. 132–33.

- 13 Illustrated in Blair, *Compendium of Chronicles*, fig. 68.
- 14 Francis Richard, "Un des peintres du manuscrit *Supplément persan* 1113 de l'Histoire des Mongols de Rašid al-dīn identifié," in *L'Iran face à la domination mongole*, pp. 307–20.
- 15 The double-page scene of the siege of Baghdad (Diez A, fol. 70, S. 7 and 4) is reproduced in İpşiroğlu, *Saray-Alben*, pp. 17–18.
- 16 Compare, for example, the two manuscripts' depictions of the enthronement of Chaghatai Khan and his wife (P1820, p. 54; D31, fol. 58v), Qubilai Khan's soldiers drowning (P1820, p. 107; D31, fol. 105r), and the enthronement of Buraq Khan (P1820, p. 58; D31, fol. 56v). Images from the Asiatic Society of Bengal manuscript are reproduced in Basil Gray, "An Unknown Fragment of the 'Jāmi' al-tawārikh' in the Asiatic Society of Bengal," *Ars Orientalis* 1 (1954), pp. 65–75, figs. 15, 18, and 23; and for the Rampur images, see Schmitz and Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings*, pls. 239–40, 245.
- 17 Gray, "An Unknown Fragment," pp. 66–68.
- 18 Barbara Brend, "A Sixteenth-Century Manuscript from Transoxiana: Evidence for a Continuing Tradition in Illustration," *Muqarnas* 11 (1994), pp. 103–16, especially pp. 108–109.
- 19 The *Tavārikh-i guzīda-i nuṣratnāma*, a history of the Turkish races up to the reign of Abū'l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad (ca. 1451–1510), was composed in Chaghatai during the early sixteenth century. The British Library illustrated copy of this text (Or. 3222) is discussed at length in Brend, "A Sixteenth-Century Manuscript."
- 20 Compare, for example, p. 58 of the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* (illustrated as fig. 4 here) with folio 50v in Or. 3222 (illustrated in Brend, "A Sixteenth-Century Manuscript," fig. 2).
- 21 As Brend shows, both Or. 3222 and the Calcutta *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, like the Rampur *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, share a curious relationship with fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century illustrated historical manuscripts from Tabriz and Shiraz. Together, the three codices may speak to a broader mid-sixteenth-century archaizing trend in manuscript illustration that, as Brend outlines, first took root in Transoxiana and then traveled to India. See Brend, "A Sixteenth-Century Manuscript," especially pp. 108–14.
- 22 See, for example, Ada Adamova, "Repetition of Compositions in Manuscripts: The *Khamṣa* of Nizami in Leningrad," in *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny (Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 67–75; Ada Adamova, "The Hermitage Manuscript of Nizami's *Khamṣa* Dated 835/1431," *Islamic Art* 5 (2001), pp. 53–132, but especially pp. 77–78; Roxburgh, *Persian Album*; and David J. Roxburgh, "Persian Drawings, ca. 1400–1500: Materials and Creative Procedures," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002), pp. 44–77.
- 23 Roxburgh, *Persian Album*, p. 300.
- 24 As Seyller has shown, Akbar's artists did not even mine their own creative output from the circa 1582–86 *Razmnāma* (Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II City Palace Museum, Jaipur) in the production of the now-dispersed 1598–99 *Razmnāma* (Seyller, "Model and Copy"). Interestingly, the pictorial cycles of imperial copies of the *Bāburnāma*—which, like the *Razmnāma*, had only recently been composed (or, more accurately, rendered into Persian from the original Chaghatai)—do in fact share a close relationship to each other, a point that Seyller attributes to these manuscripts' "dynastic and political importance" ("Model and Copy," p. 50). One would assume that the *Jāmi' al-tavārikh* was similarly significant for Akbar, and yet his artists elected to maintain a distance between their own illustrations to this text and those available in the earlier Rampur manuscript. On the pictorial cycles of imperial *Bāburnāma* manuscripts, see Smart, "Paintings from the *Baburnama*," and Smart, "Yet Another Illustrated Akbari *Baburnama* Manuscript," pp. 105–15.
- 25 Eleanor Sims, "Ibrahim Sultan's Illustrated Zafarnama of 1436 and its Impact in the Muslim East," in *Timurid Art and Culture*, ed. Golombek and Subtelny, pp. 132–43. Admittedly, one-to-one copying is rare in Timurid manuscripts as well.
- 26 See Seyller, "Overpainting in the Cleveland Tutinama," pp. 283–318; John Seyller, "Recycled Images: Overpainting in Early Mughal Art," in Canby, ed., *Humayun's Garden Party*, pp. 49–80; and Laura E. Parodi et al., "Tracing the History of a Mughal Album Page in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art," <http://www.asianart.com/articles/mughal/index.html>, accessed March 1, 2011.
- 27 The two Mughal-period additions are on folios 430v and 531r; overpainting (most likely a repair) also dating from the Mughal period is evident in the rendering of Bizhan on folio 180r. For the most recent and comprehensive discussion of the Mughal history of RAS Pers 239, see Barbara Brend and A. H. Morton, *Muhammad Juki's Shahnamah of Firdausi* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 2010), pp. 148–75.

- 28 The Last Judgment (fol. 5v) is ascribed to Manohar (act. 1580–1620) and Nanha (act. 1582–1635), and the picnicking scene (fol. 6r) to Narsingh (act. late sixteenth to early seventeenth century). The former is reproduced in R. H. Pinder-Wilson et al., *Paintings from the Muslim Courts of India* (London: British Museum, 1976), no. 94a. Mughal treatment of manuscripts whose illustrative programs originated in Bukhara have been explored by a number of scholars, most recently by Mika Natif, “The SOAS *Anvār-i Suhaylī*: The Journey of a ‘Reincarnated’ Manuscript,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008), pp. 331–58.
- 29 Another manuscript copied by the famed calligrapher Sulṭān ‘Alī of Mashhad, a *Divān* of Ḥāfiẓ (1325/26–1389/90) (British Library, London, Or. 14139), was remargined with elaborate *ḥāshiyā* (border) designs, some featuring human figures, that were added in the early seventeenth century at Jahangir’s court. See J. P. Losty, “The ‘Butē’ Ḥafiz and the Development of Border Decoration in the Manuscript Studio of the Mughals,” *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 993 (1985), pp. 855–56, 858–71.
- 30 The manuscript, which is dated AH 872 (1467–68 CE), is in the John Work Garrett Collection, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. The manuscript’s six double-page paintings are on folios 82v–83r, 115v–116r, 174v–175r, 282v–283r, 359v–360r, and 449v–450r. The Timurid dimensions of the manuscript are discussed in Eleanor Sims, “The Garrett Manuscript of the Zafar-Name: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Timurid Patronage,” PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1973, pp. 367–75; and in Thomas Lentz and Glenn Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), pp. 262, 357. For the manuscript’s afterlife at the Mughal court, see Michael Brand and Glenn Lowry, *Akbar’s India: Art from the Mughal City of Victory* (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1985), pp. 91–92, 150–51.
- 31 Blair, *Compendium of Chronicles*, pp. 31–32.
- 32 Examples of inscribed rubies are reproduced in Manuel Keene with Salam Kaoukji, *Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals* (New York: Thames and Hudson in association with The al-Sabah Collection), cat. nos. 12.1–12.11. Jahangir’s interest in gems is discussed within a broader framework of royal collecting and political legitimacy in Corinne Lefèvre, “Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605–1627) in his Memoirs,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 4 (2007), pp. 452–89, especially pp. 478–80.
- 33 Reproduced in Carboni and Komaroff, *Legacy of Genghis Khan*, fig. 133.
- 34 According to Karin Rührdanz, “Illustrationen zu Rašīd al-Dīn,” pp. 297–98, the Mongol couples in the Diez Album may have been created to illustrate genealogical charts in the first volume of the *Jāmi‘ al-tavāriḳī*. The Rampur manuscript, as mentioned previously, also draws from this first volume of Rashīd al-Dīn’s text.
- 35 A recent article by Molly Emma Aitken presents exciting insights into artistic reuse as well as narrative and formalistic disjunction in paintings and album pages from the Mughal and Rajput courts. See Molly Emma Aitken, “Parataxis and the Practice of Reuse, from Mughal Margins to Mir Kalān Khān,” *Archives of Asian Art* 59 (2009), pp. 81–103.
- 36 Qazi Ahmad Tattavi and Asif Khan Qazvini, *Tarikh-i Alfi* (Millennial history), ed. Ghulam Riza Tabatabai Majd, vol. 1 (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intisharat-i ‘ilmi va farhangī, AH 1382/2003 CE), p. 241. In a fascinating parallel—though predating the *Ta’riḳh-i alfi* by more than one hundred fifty years—Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī applied the title of *mujaddid* to Shāhrukh in his *Zafarnāma* (Book of victory), completed around 1425. On the concept of *mujaddid* more generally, see E. van Donzel, “Mudjaddid,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM (Leiden: Brill, 1999); and in the context of Timurid and Mughal formulations of power and legitimacy, see Ahmed Azfar Moin, “Islam and the Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran,” PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010.
- 37 Roxburgh has argued that the coexistence of a “purposeful anachronism of style” and antiquarian modes of depiction in historical manuscripts created for Shahrukh, Baysunghur, and Ibrahim Sultan during the early fifteenth century served not only to “stress continuity” but also “to make the present seem inevitable, preordained...” (*Persian Album*, pp. 132–33).

BIBLE ILLUSTRATION IN TENTH-CENTURY IBERIA

Reconsidering the Role of al-Andalus in the León Bible of 960

Abstract

During the height of Umayyad power and the final years of the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman III in Córdoba, the scribes Florentius and Sanctius of Valeránica in Burgos penned and decorated the León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capítular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2) for an unidentified patron. Produced along the permeable frontier between northern Iberia and al-Andalus, it remains the most densely illustrated Bible to survive from the first millennium and despite many years of study, much remains unknown about the codex. Utilizing the courtly material culture of tenth-century al-Andalus, references to the diplomatic and familial relationships across the Iberian frontier, and the program of illustration within the manuscript, this paper¹ seeks to place the León Bible within a tenth-century Iberian aristocratic context of production and provide new avenues through which to examine its illuminations. Previous evaluations have tended to isolate single illustrations and either minimize Islamic contributions or ascribe a political message to discrete motifs. This study, however, suggests that by considering the manuscript's overall program alongside the resonances of Umayyad courtly art, one may not only reopen the question of the relationship between Andalusí art and Mozarabic manuscript illustration, but also begin to respond to the León Bible's many unanswered questions, including patronage, function, and meaning.

IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, the Mallorcan historian José María Quadrado recalled his examination of the pages of the León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capítular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2) in the archives of the Real Colegiata de San Isidoro in León, writing the following words:

Of all the famous tenth- and eleventh-century codices that enrich the library, brought together from the ancient monasteries to San Isidoro, only the precious Bible written in 960 by the priest Sanctius remains complete. Its illuminations and vignettes are admirably luxurious for its period and with its darkened-faced figures, curious costumes, and gloomy fantasies, it provides an exact type of the artistic character of that anxious and tenebrous century.²

With reference to the somber, yet fantastical character of the Bible's illustrations, Quadrado's comments register as romantic, while at the same time suggest that he saw within the book something of its tenth-century Iberian context. Alluding to the darkened skin of the figures, due to age rather than any intention of the artist, and drawing attention to what he considered the troubled time in which the illuminations were executed, Quadrado's characterizations of the Bible of 960 attempt to

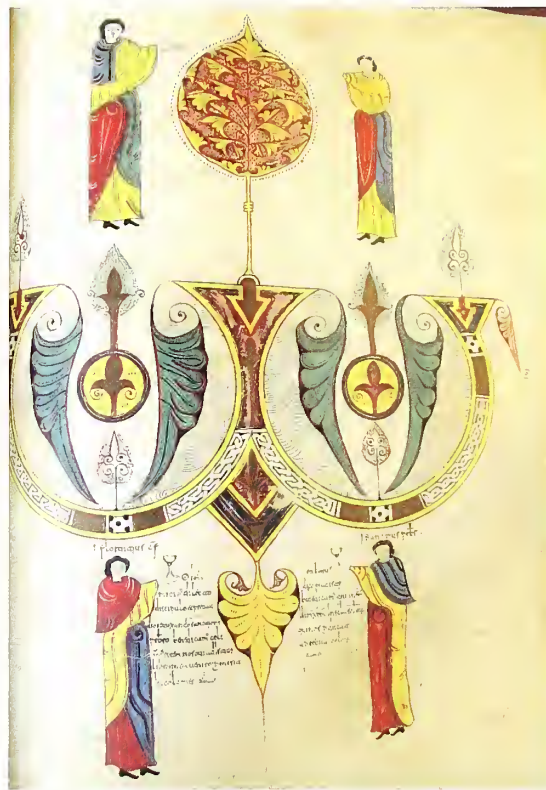
link the codex to its own cultural matrix rather than as a tool for reconstructing a lost and even more distant past.

Because many approaches to the León Bible have used the manuscript as a lens through which to see the lost beginnings of early Christian Bible illustration, it is productive to seek alternative avenues for inquiry that bypass this ontological goal in order to understand the codex on its own terms.³ This process involves both considering the Bible as an artifact whose illustrations inflect its use and taking into account its tenth-century frontier context of production as a means to nuance ongoing explorations of its function and elaborate program of illumination. By reevaluating previous scholarly approaches that regard the manuscript as a distinctly Iberian artifact whose manufacture is inextricably linked to a dynamic multicultural milieu, I propose to take into account the rich cross-cultural interaction along the borders of al-Andalus and northern Iberia, while simultaneously considering the Bible of 960 as a whole, experiential tenth-century object.

The Manuscript

The León Bible of 960 is an illuminated pandect, or complete Bible, a format that was exceedingly rare in the early Middle Ages.⁴ Also known also as the Codex Biblicus Legionensis and the Visigothic-Mozarabic Bible, it is the most densely illustrated Bible to survive from the first millennium. Its colophon precisely dates its completion to June 19, 960, during the brief reign of the Leonese king Ordoño IV. The Bible was produced in the scriptorium of the now-ruined monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo de Valeránica in Burgos.⁵ It has been in the archives at San Isidoro in León since at least the twelfth century, as indicated by the presence of a copy completed in 1162 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 3).⁶

Despite the codex's immense size and luxurious qualities, the patron of the León Bible remains unidentified as do the exact contributions of the two scribes responsible for its creation. The scribe Sanctius takes credit for the manuscript in the colophon and elsewhere in the book, yet the final illustration—the oft-reproduced omega page, a standard form that appears in many valuable tenth-century Spanish manuscripts—suggests another scribe had a role in the Bible's production (fig. 1). The full-page illustration features a large omega outlined in bright yellow pigment and filled with intricate lozenges of interlace and gold, blossoming on each side into a green split palmette. Below the omega, two figures, Sanctius and Florentius, raise their chalices to commemorate the completion of the manuscript. Additional labels underscore the congratulatory appearance of the painting and present a dialogue between the two characters in which Florentius, also the known scribe of several other codices, praises his *discipulo*, while Sanctius congratulates his *magister*.⁷ As rare as it is to have such detailed information about the date and artists of an early



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Florentius and Sanctius, Detail of page with Omega and Self-Portraits, León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2), f. 514r, ink and color on vellum, 47.5 x 34.5 cm, produced at the monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo de Valeránica (Burgos, Spain). After *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Biblia visigotica-mózarabe* (León: Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, 1999).

medieval work of art, there is much that remains unknown, including the patronage, function, and context of the manuscript's use.

The most notable aspect of the Bible is undoubtedly the amount of illumination contained within its pages. It consists of 517 folios containing the Latin Vulgate with marginal glosses preserving the Vetus Latina text. Arabic glosses, variously dated from the tenth and twelfth centuries, often appear in the margins.⁸ The manuscript is densely illustrated with narrative scenes, decorated initials, ornamental vine scrolls, and other extra-biblical subject matter, beginning with a frontispiece featuring the Maiestas Domini, followed by genealogical tables punctuated by figural illustrations, present also in illustrated versions of Beatus of Liébana's *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*. The Old Testament has ninety-two narrative illustrations spread throughout its books, though they are not evenly distributed. These illustrations, with few exceptions, are situated within the columns of text where space was left for their addition; this arrangement has led scholars to conclude that the Bible of 960 retains the format of the earliest forms of manuscript illustration and is based on an intermediary closely linked to an early Christian or Visigothic archetype. The New Testament appears virtually without illustration, featuring only the Eusebian canon tables inhabited with beasts and four portraits, commonly designated as the Apostle Paul, appearing at the incipit of four of his letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.

Previous Approaches

Despite its significance within early Spanish manuscript illustration, discussions of the Bible of 960 are few, often brief, and generally relative to a broader topic of inquiry, with few exceptions. The primary focus of these studies, though, is the



2
Florentius and Sanctius, Page with Canon Table, León Bible of 960, León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2), f. 402v, ink and color on vellum, 47.5 x 34.5 cm, produced at the monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo de Valeránica (Burgos, Spain). After *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Biblia visigotica-mozarabe* (León: Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, 1999).

way in which the illustrations stem from earlier traditions of manuscript illumination rather than how they pointedly reference the Bible's own context of production. This methodology has remained the primary scholarly approach to the codex.⁹ Studies of the Bible that also consider cultural exchange along the frontier of northern Iberia and al-Andalus are rare, and these considerations generally fall within two categories. One seeks to isolate motifs or styles within the Bible that presumably indicate a type of "borrowing" from Islamic art or Sasanian art. The other, which also isolates specific illustrations, uses particular miniatures to suggest the presence of interaction, usually frontier conflict, within the pages of the manuscript. As early as 1881, Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos remarked on the "markedly Mohammedan character" of one page of the Bible's canon tables, suggesting that the architecture of the table—with its double arcade, trapezoidal impost blocks, prevalence of red and yellow, and overall decadence—recalled that of the Great Mosque of Córdoba (fig. 2). Based on these observations, the author posited that Sanctius was likely a Mozarab and the illustration "undoubtedly made under the impression or memory" of the great Cordoban building.¹⁰

While twentieth-century critical inquiries into the illustrations largely focused on using a philological approach to reconstruct a possible archetype for the manuscript, brief mentions were made of how it might relate to Islamic art. Although John Williams acknowledges that northern artists were familiar with the decorative vocabulary of textiles, ivories, and other portable goods from the Byzantine and Islamic worlds, he concludes that the use of Islamic sources in the León Bible is minimal. The exception is the omega page, which contains motifs such as the split palmette and toasting figures that Williams likens to Islamic ivories and Nishapur ceramics, respectively.¹¹ Following Williams, O. K. Werckmeister presents studies that more directly address Islamic art and the Bible of 960. He argues not only that single miniatures had a relationship to Islamic and Sasanian sources, but also suggests a possible political element in which the illuminations evoke Islamic-Christian conflict along the frontier. In illustrations such as the Battle of Gilboa, Werckmeister observes, the Philistine leader rides in a way that recalls the posture of hunting royalty on Sasanian silver, which was possibly adapted from an Islamic model (fig. 3).¹² The image is then further inflected by contemporary exegesis, such as that of Eulogius of Córdoba, in which the biblical precedent is linked to the Mozarabic martyrs' movement in ninth-century Córdoba. While the examples are scattered, Werckmeister argues that monastic artists were occasionally able to use Islamic source material as a means for a sort of political commentary while also following precedents in more benign ways, such as the utilization of particularly personal colophons, which he likens to inscriptions on Cordoban ivories.¹³

Although discussions of the varied roles of Islamic art are more prevalent in



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Florentius and Sanctius, Detail of page with the Battle of Gilboa, León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2), f. 124v, ink and color on vellum, 47.5 x 34.5 cm, produced at the monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo de Valeránica (Burgos, Spain). After *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Biblia visigotica-mozarabe* (León: Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, 1999).

examinations of Mozarabic illustration as a whole, studies of the Bible of 960 seem to circumvent the possibilities of an Umayyad contribution to the decoration of the codex. Seeking out visual indices of Islamic art within the Bible without further explanation of their use does little to explain how the artists of the manuscript responded to their particular social and artistic environment. Likewise, the isolation of single illustrations as containing political content does not establish how the manuscript as a whole is a product of its own cultural milieu, although such approaches do allow for more nuanced readings than do attempts that seek to find some “orientalizing” quality within the Bible’s miniatures.

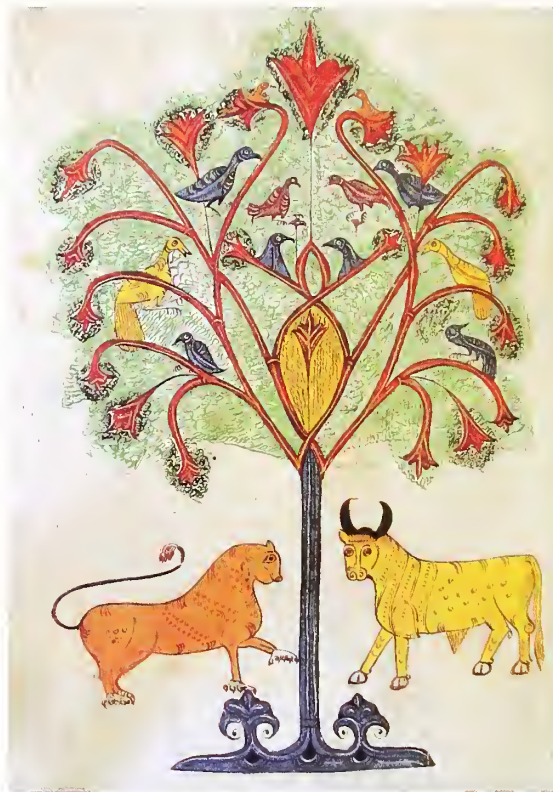
The Context

Certainly visual correspondences between the manuscript’s illustrations and Umayyad royal artistic production during the reign of ‘Abd al-Rahman III (912–61) exist. Portable luxury objects like those produced in the Madinat al-Zahra’ palace workshops attest to the refinement of Cordoban courtly material culture, which was in dialogue with the artistic production of Baghdad and earlier Mediterranean centers, as seen in tenth-century lusterware ceramics. Objects such as the game box produced for the daughter of ‘Abd al-Rahman III feature ornamental motifs, primarily vegetal in nature, that visually resonate with the vegetation presented in the Bible of 960 (fig. 4).¹⁴ Often used as diplomatic and royal gifts, portable items served as important symbols of kingship, power, and luxury and also helped transmit artistic style throughout the peninsula. The game box itself is said to have made its way into the hands of Fernán González, the famed Conde de Castilla (930–970), who later donated it to the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos. Caliphal workshops also produced fine textiles for analogous purposes.¹⁵ The decorative borders and medallions featuring stylized birds and animals share visual similarities with motifs also encountered in manuscript illumination. It is notable that aside from diplomatic gifts, *tiraz*, or embroidered textiles, also arrived in the north as linings or wrappings for caskets used for martyrs’ remains. The use of a visual vocabulary



4

Ivory game box for the daughter of ‘Abd al-Rahman III, before 961, ivory and metal, 46.5 cm (length), 9 cm (diam.), from the workshop at Madinat al-Zahra’ (Córdoba, Spain), Museo de Burgos (no. 244). Photo by the author.

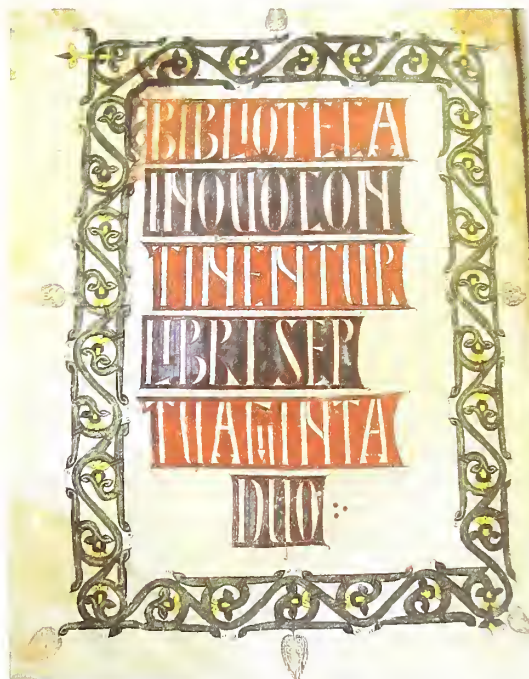


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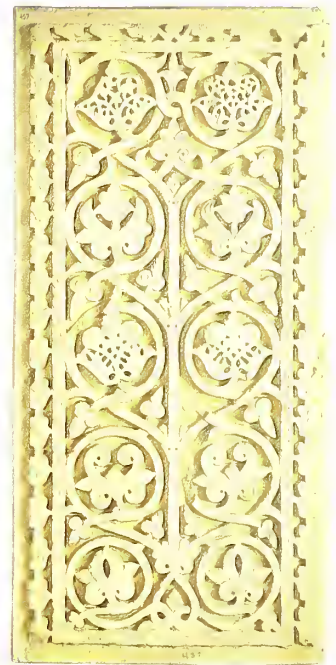
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 Florentius and Sanctius, Detail
 of page with the Dream of
 Nebuchadnezzar, León Bible of
 960 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real
 Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2),
 f. 319v, ink and color on vellum,
 47.5 x 34.5 cm, produced at the
 monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo
 de Valeránica (Burgos, Spain). After
*Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Biblia
 visigotica-mózarabe* (León: Real
 Colegiata de San Isidoro, 1999).

associated with the artistic output of courtly al-Andalus is easily detectable within the pages of the Bible of 960. A depiction of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, for example, features a confronted lion and bull under a lush tree housing a number of birds of various colors, sizes, and types (fig. 5). Confronted pairs were commonly found on Sasanian and early Islamic textiles as well as on tenth-century caliphal ivories from the workshop at Madinat al-Zahra'.¹⁶ Córdoba was well known throughout Europe as an intellectual center and hub of book production, employing numerous female copyists and secretaries.¹⁷ This is known only through descriptions, however; no material remains of illustrated manuscripts produced there survive. Still, it is probable that a thriving book industry—alongside the production of luxury objects from Córdoba's fashionable and intellectual center, especially during the reigns of 'Abd al-Rahman III and his son Al-Hakam II (961–76)—stimulated continued interchange between al-Andalus and its frontiers, particularly in aristocratic circles regardless of religious affiliation.

The visual communication between the Bible of 960 and the courtly arts of al-Andalus extends beyond portable objects. While scholars typically link the ornamental motifs of the manuscript, particularly the interlace, to illustration in northern Europe, especially Tours, the winding vegetation of the Bible's display pages recalls the delicately carved marble panels of Madinat al-Zahra' (figs. 6, 7).¹⁸ There is no indication that either Florentius or Sanctius ever traveled to Córdoba, but diplomatic and familial relationships between the north and south (as well as the accompanying exchange of gifts) underscore the availability of monumental examples to prestigious audiences from Christian Iberia.¹⁹ The Chronicle of Sampiro relates a particular diplomatic visit to the Umayyad capital by the unfortunate Leonese monarch, Sancho I (reigned 956–58, 960–66), which is also recounted by



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Florentius and Sanctius, Page with *Biblioteca in quo continentur libri septuaginta duo*, León Bible of 960 (León, Archivo Capitular, Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, MS 2), f. 3v, ink and color on vellum, 47.5 x 34.5 cm, produced at the monastery of San Pedro y San Paulo de Valeránica (Burgos, Spain). After *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Biblia visigotica-mózarabe* (León: Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, 1999).

7

Marble Relief from Madinat al-Zahra', 936–76, marble, 104 x 50 cm, Museo Arqueológico Provincial de Córdoba (no. 487). After *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilynn Dodds (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), no. 35.

al-Maqqari.²⁰ Commonly known as el Craso (“the Fat”), Sancho fled to Pamplona to seek refuge with his grandmother, Toda, after the “wicked” Ordoño IV and Fernán González deposed him. In 958, Sancho, accompanied by his grandmother and a noble entourage, was received in Córdoba, where the king found an ally in Toda’s great-nephew, ‘Abd al-Rahman III. The caliph not only formed an alliance with the deposed king but also provided the medical services of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, who cured Sancho of his obesity and enabled him to ride on horseback.

A Program?

The connections, both artistic and otherwise, between al-Andalus and northern Iberia were strong across the permeable frontier, resulting in a shared visual vocabulary. The Bible of 960 provides evidence of the appeal of Cordoban courtly refinement in northern Iberia, while simultaneously referencing aristocratic artistic production north of the Pyrenees. Yet any analysis of the Bible’s illustrations must go beyond noting these visual similarities. Rather than isolating single images for analysis, it is fruitful to consider the manuscript’s overall program of illustration in order to formulate hypotheses about its production and patronage. The notion of a program within the Bible of 960 is contentious, considering that the illustrations do not harmonize with any one liturgy, exegetical tradition, or liturgical song.²¹ The conclusion that the manuscript lacks a particular program is based on the assumption that it was intended to remain within the monastic community. However, such a luxurious volume, featuring a staggering amount of illustration and the use of gold, suggests a “deluxe” Bible rather than an “economy” book, which itself promotes the idea of an aristocratic or influential patron, although he or she remains unidentified.²²

Looking to the manuscript’s illustrations, it is apparent that certain cycles are emphasized over others and in such a way that may underscore the suggestion of an aristocratic patron. Exodus and the books of Kings have considerably more illus-

The Dispersion of Old Testament
Miniatures in the León Bible of 960.

BOOK	NUMBER OF ILLUSTRATIONS
Genesis	2
Exodus	26
Leviticus	1
Numbers	0
Deuteronomy	4
Joshua	10
Judges	0
Ruth	0
Kings (I–IV)	33
Chronicles (I–II)	0
Ezra	0
Nehemiah	0
Tobit	0
Judith	0
Esther	0
Job	3
Psalms	0
Proverbs	0
Ecclesiastes	0
Song of Solomon	0
Isaiah	0
Jeremiah	4
Lamentations	1
Ezekiel	1
Daniel	7
Hosea	0
Joel	0
Amos	0
Obadiah	0
Jonah	0
Micah	0
Nahum	0
Habakkuk	0
Zephaniah	0

trations than do any of the other cycles. Rather than reflecting a lost archetype, it is more likely that the density of illustration in these particular books resonates with the concerns of the party who commissioned the manuscript (fig. 8). Exodus and Kings in particular take on metaphorical significations whose multivalent meanings are not only biblical, but also historical and allegorical in nature, relating to issues of exile, warfare, and kingship in contemporary Iberia.²³ Allusions to these contemporary subjects are reiterated in the accouterments of war depicted in the manuscript.²⁴ Robert Calkins noted as early as 1984 that the decoration of illuminated manuscripts establishes a sequential hierarchy and ultimately affects the reader's overall experience and interpretation of a book.²⁵ By viewing the Bible of 960 in this manner, the density of illustration in Exodus and Kings is arresting. When considered alongside the scribes' use of a courtly visual vocabulary (both Christian and Islamic), the suggestion of an aristocratic commission becomes more plausible. Although he does not utilize the illustrations as evidence, Vicente García Lobo suggests that perhaps the infanta Elvira served as the patron and intended the book for San Salvador de Palat de Rey.²⁶ The feasibility of this particular attribution requires further substantiation, but from surviving documents it is clear that Florentius had connections to aristocratic patrons, particularly Fernán González and his son Garcí, for whom he served as a notary.²⁷

Much remains unclear about the León Bible's context of production. By noting the visual similarities between its illustrations and Umayyad artistic production, scholars have reiterated the presence of a shared visual vocabulary on the Iberian peninsula that in some instances could be deployed for prophetic, political, or even subversive reasons. Without considering the overall format of the manuscript, these conclusions cannot be fully validated.²⁸ It remains necessary to consider simultaneously the artistic production of 'Abd al-Rahman's court and the presence of a carefully constructed program of illustration. The strategic use of admired courtly imagery derived from Cordoban objects alongside a program emphasizing kingship lends further credibility to the notion that Florentius and Sanctius produced the book for a powerful patron, which is further underscored by the manuscript's luxurious qualities.

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NOTES

- 1 This paper is based on research conducted as part of my ongoing dissertation project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Verkerk.
- 2 J. M. Quadrado, *Recuerdos y bellezas de Espana: León y Asturias* (Asturias: Ayalga Ediciones, 1977). p. 352. Translation is my own.
- 3 The most significant contributions to the study of the Bible of 960 (as well as the numerous illustrated versions of Beatus of Liébana's *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*) in the twentieth century are undoubtedly the studies by John Williams. See John Williams, "The Illustrations of the León Bible of 960, An Iconographic Analysis" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1962); John Williams, "Model for the León Bibles," *Madrider Mitteilungen* 8 (1967), pp. 281–86, pls. 69–72; John Williams, "A Castilian Tradition of Bible Illumination: The Romanesque Bible from San Millán," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965), pp. 66–85; John Williams, *Early Spanish Manuscript Illumination* (New York: G. Braziller, 1977); John Williams, "The Bible in Spain," *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. John Williams (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 179–218.
- 4 Lawrence Nees recently highlighted the significance of illustrated pandects in the early Middle Ages and their part in a larger "pattern of gift-giving" in aristocratic culture. Lawrence Nees, "Problems of Form and Function in Early Medieval Bibles from Northwest Europe," in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, pp. 121–77.
- 5 The monastery was likely part of a series of foundations by Fernán González. See John Williams, "A Contribution to the History of the Castilian Monastery of Valeránica and the Scribe Florentius," *Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 11 (1970), pp. 231–48, and Luciano Huidobro, "El monasterio de San Pedro de Berlangas en Tordomar y su célebre calígrafo el monje Florencio," *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos de Burgos* 14 (1935), pp. 245–56, 286–90 as well as works on the scriptorium, such as Barbara Shailor, "The Scriptorium at San Pedro de Berlangas" (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 1975); Justo Pérez y Urbel, O.S.B., "Florencio, el miniaturista famoso del monasterio de Valeránica," in *Classica et Iberica: A Festschrift in Honor of the Reverend Joseph M.-F. Marique, S.J.*, ed. P. T. Brannan, S.J. (Worcester, MA: Institute for Early Christian Iberian Studies, College of the Holy Cross, 1975), pp. 393–416, and more recently Elena García Molinos, "Florencio de Valeránica, calígrafo y notario del siglo X," *El reino de León en la edad media XI* (León: Centro de estudios e investigación San Isidoro, 2004), pp. 243–415.
- 6 Ana Suárez González, *Los codices III.1, III.2, III.3, IV y V: Biblia, Liber capituli, Misal*, Patrimonio Cultural de San Isidoro de León, B (León: Universidad de León, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1997). How the Bible came to be in the collection of San Isidoro remains an unknown aspect of the manuscript's provenance.
- 7 Florentius is the scribe responsible for a copy of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS 80), a *Liber Homiliarum* of Smaragdus (Córdoba, Biblioteca Capitular, MS 1), a *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* by Cassiodorus (lost), and the fragments of the Oña Bible at Santo Domingo de Silos (1 leaf) and the Casa Central of the Hermandad de Sacerdotes Operarios

- Diocesan in Rome (11 leaves). Documents also remain that demonstrate Florentius's work as a notary.
- 8 J. M. Casciaro Ramirez, "Las glosas marginales árabes del codex visigótico legionensis de la vulgata," *Scripta Theologica* 2 (1970), pp. 303–39, and Ángel Custodio López López, "The Arabic Marginal Glosses in the Codex Visigothicus Legionensis," in *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Twenty Studies* (León: Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, Fundación Hullera Vasco Leonesa, Universidad de León, Ediciones Lancia, 1999), pp. 303–18.
 - 9 In the most recent major publication on the Bible of 960, *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Twenty Studies*, this remains the primary methodology, despite John Williams's contribution to the volume, which pointedly disputes the applicability of such an approach.
 - 10 Rodrigo Amador de los Ríos y Villalta, "Página de una Biblia del siglo X que se conserva en el Archivo de San Isidoro de León," *Museo español de antigüedades* 9 (1881), pp. 521–32. Translation is my own.
 - 11 Williams, "Iconographic Analysis," pp. 146–49. Specifically, Williams cites an ivory from *A Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 5, ed. A. U. Pope (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938–39), pl. 593b, and a Nishapur bowl from Arthur Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, 4th ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), pls. 19, 20a. See also John Williams, *The Illustrated Beatus: A Corpus of the Illustrations of the Commentary on the Apocalypse*, vol. 1 (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1994).
 - 12 Werckmeister cites a seventh-century Sasanian silver-gilt plate found at Novo-Bayazet that depicts a king hunting on horseback with his leg bent toward the rear of the horse (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, no. I.4925). O. K. Werckmeister, "Islamische Formen in spanischen Miniaturen des 10. Jahrhunderts und das Problem der mozarabischen Buchmalerei," *Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo* 22 (Spoleto, 1965), pp. 933–67, and for the Gerona Beatus, O. K. Werckmeister, "The Islamic Rider in the Beatus of Girona," *Gesta* 36, no. 2 (1997), pp. 101–6.
 - 13 O. K. Werckmeister, "Art of the Frontier: Mozarabic Monasticism," in *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), pp. 120–32. On the Cordoban ivories, see Manuel Gómez-Moreno, "Los marfiles cordobeses y sus derivaciones," *Archivo español de arte y arqueología* 3 (1927), pp. 233–43; José Ferrandis, *Marfiles y Azabaches Españoles* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1928); John Beckwith, *Caskets from Córdoba* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1960); Ernst Kühnel, *Die islamischen Elfenbeinskulpturen, VIII–XIII Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1971); Renata Holod, "Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. Jerrilynn Dodds (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), pp. 41–48; Oleg Grabar, "Two Paradoxes in the Islamic Art of the Spanish Peninsula," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 583–91; Julie Harris, "Muslim Ivories in Christian Hands: The Leire Casket in Context," *Art History* 18, no. 2 (1995), pp. 213–21; Avinoam Shalem, "From Royal Caskets to Relic Containers: Two Ivory Caskets from Burgos and Madrid," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), pp. 24–38; Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasures of the Latin West* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Circular Visions of Fertility and Punishment: Caliphal Ivory Caskets from al-Andalus," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997), pp. 19–41; Mariam Rosser-Owen, "A Cordoban Ivory Pyxis Lid in the Ashmolean Museum," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999), pp. 16–31; Sheila Blair, "Ivories and Inscriptions from Islamic Spain," *Oriente Moderno* 23, no. 2 (2004), pp. 375–86; Cynthia Robinson, "Love in the Time of Fitna: 'Courtliness' and the 'Pamplona' Casket," in *Revisiting al-Andalus*, ed. Glaire Anderson and Mariam Rosser-Owen (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 99–113; and the series of essays on the ivories of Muslim Spain in *Journal of the David Collection* 2, nos. 1 & 2, ed. Kjeld von Folsach and Joachim Meyer (2005).
 - 14 See Holod, "Luxury Arts of the Caliphal Period," in *Al-Andalus*, and catalogue entry 1 in the same publication.
 - 15 See, for example, the textile fragment in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid, 2071, thought to be a piece from a Muslim *almaizar*. *Al-Andalus*, pp. 224–25.
 - 16 For instance, the Pyxis of al-Mughira (Paris, Louvre, OA 4068) features facing figures beneath a luxurious tree as well as numerous confronting beasts or figures enveloped in a thick web of vegetation.
 - 17 Robert Hillenbrand, "The Ornament of the World: Medieval Córdoba as a Cultural Centre," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. S. K. Jayyusi (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 112–35. Al-Maqqari attests to the status of books in al-Andalus. See Pascual de Gayangos, *The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain*, vol. 1 (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1840), pp. 139–40.
 - 18 Fernando Galván Freile downplays the presence of Islamic ornamentation in the manuscript. Fernando Galván Freile, "Initials, Borders, and Other Decorative Elements in the Miniatures of the Codex," in *Codex Biblicus Legionensis*:

- Twenty Studies*, pp. 253–65. Considerably more attention had been paid to Florentius's innovative use of northern interlace. See Jacques Guilmain, "On the chronological development and classification of decorated initials in Latin manuscripts of tenth-century Spain," *Bulletin of the Rylands University of Manchester* 63, no. 2 (spring 1981), pp. 369–401; Jacques Guilmain, "Zoomorphic Decoration and the Problem of the Sources of Mozarabic Illumination," *Speculum* 35 (1960), pp. 17–38; Jacques Guilmain, "Interlace and the Influence of the North on Mozarabic Illumination," *Art Bulletin* 42 (1960), pp. 211–18; Jacques Guilmain, "Observations on some Early Interlace Initials and Frame Ornaments in Mozarabic Manuscripts of León-Castile," *Scriptorium* 15 (1961), pp. 23–35; Jacques Guilmain, "Some Observations on Mozarabic Manuscript Illumination in Light of Recent Publications," *Scriptorium* 30 (1976), pp. 183–91; Jacques Guilmain, "Northern Influence in the Initials and Ornaments of the Beatus Manuscripts," *Actas del Simposio para el estudio de los codices del Comentario al Apocalipsis de Beato de Liébana*, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1980), pp. 65–67; John Williams, "Tours and the Medieval Art of Spain," in *Florilegium in Honorem Carl Nordenfalk Octogenarii Contextum* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseums Stockholm, 1987), pp. 197–208.
- 19 Although he refers to himself as *peregrini* in a colophon, it is unlikely that Florentius came from al-Andalus. Molinos, "Florencio de Valeránica," p. 262. D. F. Ruggles emphasizes the familial connections between northern Iberia and al-Andalus in "Mothers of a Hybrid Dynasty: Race, Genealogy, and Acculturation in al-Andalus," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 1 (winter 2004), pp. 65–94.
 - 20 *Historia silense*, ed. Justo Pérez de Urbel and Atilano González Ruiz-Zorrilla (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1959), pp. 369–70, Justo Pérez de Urbel, *Sampiro, su crónica y la monarquía leonesa en el siglo X* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1952), pp. 334–39, and, for al-Maqqari, Gayangos, vol. 2, pp. 139. See also Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *Historia de España*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1956), pp. 142–43; Reinhart Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne pendant le moyen âge*, vol. 1 (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1881), pp. 96–98; and Reinhart Dozy, *Spanish Islam: A History of the Moslems in Spain*, trans. Francis Griffin Stokes (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), pp. 440–47.
 - 21 Williams, "Bible in Spain," pp. 215–18.
 - 22 On deluxe versus economy books, see Lawrence Nees, "Problems of Form and Function in Early Medieval Bibles from Northwest Europe," in *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, pp. 121–77.
 - 23 The association of Asturian and Leonese kings with the Visigoths has received considerable attention, and sources such as the Prophetic Chronicle, which utilizes a fictional prophecy by Ezekiel to foretell the defeat of the Umayyads, attempt to use biblical history to explain contemporary events. See Yves Bonnaz, *Chroniques Asturiennes* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1987), pp. 1–9.
 - 24 Cordoban arms and symbols of caliphal power, such as the knotted flag (*'uqda*), appear throughout the manuscript's illustrations. Alvaro Soler del Campo, "Weapons, Harnesses and Flags in the Miniatures of the Codex," in *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Twenty Studies*, pp. 207–18.
 - 25 Robert Calkins, *Programs of Medieval Illumination*, Franklin D. Murphy Lectures V (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, 1984), and Robert Calkins, "Liturgical Sequence and Decorative Crescendo in the Drogo Sacramentary," *Gesta* 25 (1986), pp. 17–23.
 - 26 Following from Justo Pérez de Urbel's observation that unlike in his other productions, Florentius does not mention his monastery and abbot. Vicente García Lobo, "The Birth of the Codex," in *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Twenty Studies*, pp. 73–81.
 - 27 Molinos, "Florencio de Valeránica," pp. 381–430, and M. C. Díaz y Díaz, "The Escriptorio of Valeránica," in *Codex Biblicus Legionensis: Twenty Studies*, pp. 53–72.
 - 28 Jerrilynn Dodds highlights Mozarabic artists' strategic use of Cordoban precedents while noting that such usages can exhibit both tension and admiration. Jerrilynn Dodds, "Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art," in *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200*, pp. 26–37.



THE FREER CANTEEN, RECONSIDERED

Abstract

Widely considered a masterpiece of medieval Islamic metalwork, the Freer canteen is also an enigma. It is one of a diverse group of thirteenth-century objects from the Islamic world that bear Christian iconography. Though complex in structure and unique in decorative program, it lacks documentary inscriptions that would attest to where and when it was made, and for whom and what purpose. Its compelling Christian scenes also set it apart from the standard “princely” category of much inlaid metalwork of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, its large body, small neck, and slight handles seem incongruously, if not impractically, assembled. This article revisits the structure and decoration of the canteen in order to dispel some of the scenarios that have been proposed thus far for its use and manufacture. It proposes new purposes and contexts for its use based upon both observed and comparative evidence, and argues for a shift in locus of manufacture from Jerusalem to the Jazira.

LIKE MANY ICONIC WORKS OF ART, the silver-inlaid brass flask known as the Freer canteen (F1941.10; figs. 1, 2) has been much studied and widely published.¹ Long perceived as emblematic if enigmatic, it was the focus of studies in the inaugural editions of two prominent American journals dedicated to the field of Islamic art, *Ars Islamica* and *Muqarnas*.² Its physical condition is remarkable, and its unusual form and decoration have attracted the attention of three generations of scholars who have offered a variety of ideas regarding its origin and intended purpose. Among them are several students of Oleg Grabar, and it seems fitting that this exceptional object should be reconsidered in a volume dedicated to his memory.

It has often been proposed that the canteen manifests aspects of cultural hybridity: it is an object of unusual shape and function—whatever it may be—crafted with techniques perfected in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries in the central-eastern lands of the medieval Islamic world. It is decorated with both secular and Christian themes (Christological and hagiographic), and bears mainly benedictory inscriptions in Arabic (none documentary) commonly found on objects made for and by Muslims.³ Its very strangeness suggests that its form and decoration were deliberate, and yet its hybridity has inspired a search for context, settings in which the canteen and its decorative program might find meaning among Christians and Muslims alike. Positioning the canteen between confessions, however, has detached it from any particular culture. As Julian Raby noted recently, “... boundaries of place and patronage and even sectarian meaning became increasingly porous, and two of the most recent interpretations have centered on the notions of porosity, liminality and portability—[the canteen] an object of no fixed abode.”⁴

1

Front of the Freer canteen,
Freer Gallery of Art, F1941.10.



2

2

Back of the Freer canteen.

For this study of the canteen, a reconsideration of method is proposed: an inductive process that returns to the object itself, its physical nature, its structure, and the specificities of its design and decoration. Instead of suggesting a possible context at the outset, we will allow the “body” of the canteen to speak for itself, permitting a tangible benchmark against which to test and measure responses. This inquiry, like previous ones, seeks to move closer to the solution of its compelling mystery: what was the canteen, and for whom and what purpose was it made?

Observations on Structure

Physical examination and radiographs show that the major component of the canteen is a large, domed piece of brass formed by hammering. The brass dome has a decorated, concave boss at its apex and is divided into three registers by two articulated, annular moldings that resemble sewn welts—where the silver inlay is stitching—as if the canteen were made of leather.⁵ The dome, in turn, is attached by soldering (and possibly a hooked “scarf” joint) to a brass strip. This joint, also evocative of a sewn welt, is not as well defined as the *repoussé* moldings on the dome: it is decorated on only one side and shows some signs of separation at the seam (fig. 3).



3

3
Profile of the Freer canteen.

The inlaid decoration on the brass strip—a series of knotted roundels with figures—is turned 180 degrees to the decorated registers of the dome.

On its other long side, the brass strip is attached to a flat, round brass plate that has a circular opening in the center. The plate is decorated with two nested concentric registers: the outer one comprised of twenty-five static and gesturing saintly figures standing below a colonnade of pointed arches, and the inner one called “a centrifugal group” by Rice for its nine mounted knights that appear to move endlessly counterclockwise.⁶ The circular opening is attached with solder to a truncated cone formed from a brass sheet bent around a mandrel, soldered with a vertical seam, and sealed on the smaller end by a disk, also attached with solder. Thus the truncated cone is fixed into the interior of the canteen, its depth reaching to the topmost annular molding of the domed section.

The neck and mouth of the canteen are formed from a hammered brass sheet and are attached to the canteen at the level of the brass strip. Within the base of the neck is a flat, circular plate (possibly the brass strip itself) pierced with holes punched without artistry, whose primary function must have been to strain a liquid. Two slight and rather elegant cast brass handles link the neck to body and are soldered to the exterior of the vessel. The placement of the neck within the thickness of the brass strip, and not within the domed section, makes it appear to be off-center in profile views of the canteen. The placement of the neck is also off-center in relation to the canteen’s upright orientation indicated by the orientation of the inlaid image of the Virgin Hodegetria on the central, concave boss of the domed section. The position is ungainly, but at the same time seems to be purposeful.⁷

Nonetheless, however intentioned their placement, the neck, handles, and the strip to which they are affixed may not be original. A number of details point to at least one campaign of repair of the canteen, if not two: the inlaid inscription on the neck is drawn in an elongated, cursive style that is different from the angular style found on the rest of the canteen; the silver “pearls” in the two borders, above and below the inscription have a different shape and pacing compared to those that divide the two registers on the back of the canteen; the brass strip to which

the neck and handles are affixed is not only directionally transposed in terms of its decoration, but its silver roundels contain an array of secular, courtly themes (seated drinkers, musicians, and predatory birds attacking ducks) that do not bear any relationship to the ecclesiastical themes on the rest of the canteen.⁸ There are also differences in the quality of craftsmanship and details of composition between the very fine domed section and the rather less fine brass strip that suggest that a replacement has been made.

In the animated register, three simple roundels contain a centered, seated, frontal figure that holds a crescent moon aloft. The figure fills the space completely, without any truncation of its halo. The background is suggested by fleshy palmettes, though it remains light in color. The three roundels are located precisely above the three scenes from the Life of Christ on the front, evidence too of the integrity and coherence of the decorative program of the domed section.⁹ In the strip, knotted roundels contain figures that are proportionally smaller, not necessarily centered, often seated in three-quarters view, with truncated halos. The backgrounds are punched with small devices to appear darker and strongly contrasted with the figures.¹⁰ It is hard to imagine that the dome and strip were made at the same time and by the same hand. Still, the strip was artfully integrated into the canteen and in the absence of its original patron, the canteen's custodians may not have considered the coherence of its decorative program to be of primary importance.

Together, the evidence of the replacement strip, the new neck and handles, and the strainer in the neck indicate that the canteen had a practical function and was used over a period of time. Surely one of the challenges of using soldered seams is ensuring watertightness. The internal pressure of the water (or other liquid) and the external pressure on lower right side of the canteen on which it probably rested when displayed may have contributed to the separation of its seams. Some evidence for this kind of stress-fracture can be seen at present in the separating seam between the strip and the flat plate at the bottom of the canteen. Stress fractures can also be seen in the mouth, suggesting that an inferior alloy containing a higher amount of lead was used for the repairs.

How it was held or displayed when in use in its original context remains a question as the new handles—though adding support to the neck—could not have borne any weight. It may have rested upon its flat side, perhaps preserved in a special box. If hung for display, it might have been suspended by a leather support around the bottom that threaded through the handles or even by chains. In use, it may simply have been held or steadied by one or two people.

If one can accept that the strip with roundels is a replacement, what was the decorative program of the original strip?¹¹ The registers in the domed section alternate between figural imagery and inscriptions, terminating with a register of animated,

anonymous titles. Thus, the strip may have contained what has always seemed oddly missing from such a luxurious object: the name of its patron and documentation of its manufacture.

If the object was not anonymous and did not bear secular, decorative themes originally, there is less evidence for its manufacture in a fluid and porous Muslim-Christian context, as has been suggested previously. Instead, the role and even nature of the patron comes into focus in the apparent purposefulness of canteen's odd shape and in the layout, content, and anomalies in its major, decorated sections. There is no doubt that the canteen is a hybrid; it bears ecclesiastical imagery that is at times altered purposefully and at times inaccurately. Its inscriptions are in Arabic, and it does not bear a single inscription—unless it is the missing one—in Syriac, the language of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Mosul, where it is likely that the canteen was made. Its hybridity is not intercultural, however, but rather communitarian: ecclesiastical and lay.

The “Pit and Pole” Theory

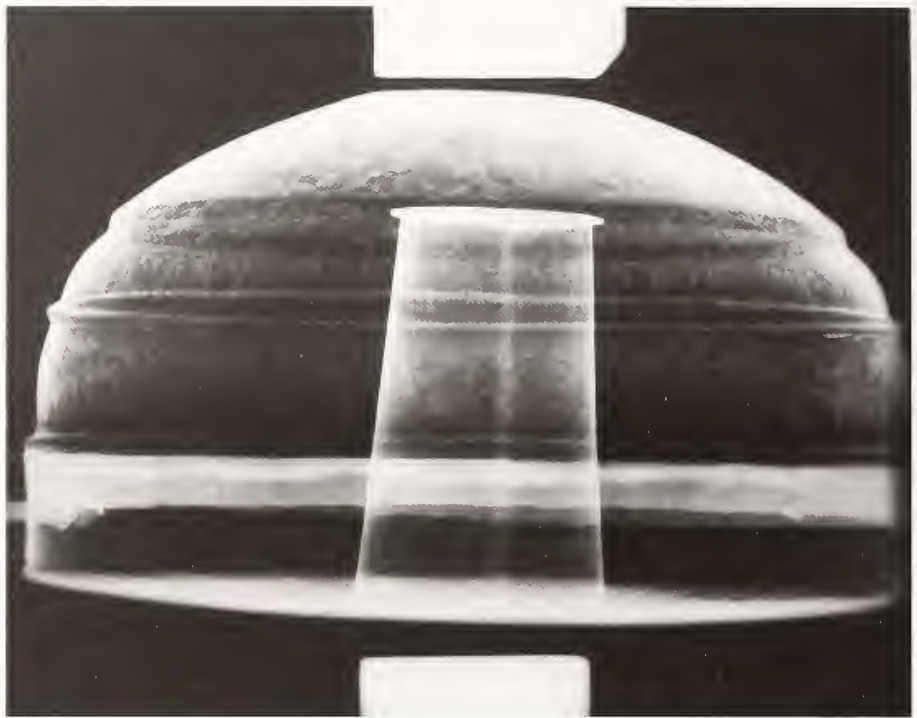
When Laura Schneider concluded quite rightly that the canteen had a practical function, she offered a well-intentioned hypothesis to explain how such a large object with disproportionately small handles might have been lifted to dispense its contents: the void created by the truncated cone functioned as a socket for the horizontal arm of a wooden post that supported the filled canteen (the “pit and pole” theory).¹² Supporting this idea was a personal communication from Prof. Richard Frye who claimed to have witnessed a similar practice near Samarkand. This Central Asian use has never been independently documented, and whatever it was, it has no bearing on the Freer canteen.¹³ However, the idea was imaginative and evoked other fanciful images. One example: the canteen was a commemorative item commissioned and brought to Europe by a crusader knight (who perhaps steadied it on the pommel of his saddle by means of its “pit”).¹⁴ A conditioning factor here is that the canteen shape, with its one flat side, is clearly meaningful: it evokes travel and the pilgrim, and was also copied symbolically in glass.¹⁵ Nonetheless, there is no evidence that the Freer canteen was intended to be or was ever carried on horse-, mule-, or camel-back. Indeed, its generally excellent condition and careful repairs would seem to point to a very judicious and attentive use. Its evocation of pilgrimage clearly had a different significance.

Schneider observed that “the truncated pit, however, shows signs of wear, and was undoubtedly the means by which the piece was steadied...”¹⁶ Reexamination of the soldered seam between the circular opening in the flat plate and the truncated cone reveals signs of filing—tool marks—not signs of wear from use (fig. 4). This is a fundamental point. Furthermore, radiographs of the interior show that the



4

4
Detail of mouth of truncated cone
in the canteen.



5

5
Radiograph of the canteen in
profile. Courtesy of Freer|Sackler
Department of Conservation and
Scientific Research.

sides of the truncated cone are straight and not distorted in any way, something that can also be observed by the naked eye (fig. 5). There is no physical trace of a pole inserted into the cone, or that the cone, made of relatively thin metal, ever sustained the weight of the full canteen. Finally, a cone made of hammered metal with soldered seams—observed but misinterpreted by Schneider—is an unlikely support for sustaining great weight.

If the “pit and pole” theory can be discarded for lack of evidence, what was the function of the cone inside the canteen? The filing marks around the rim of the opening suggest that something has been removed. This point will be returned to shortly.

The Porcelain Parallels

Some scholars have asserted that the Freer canteen is a unique object that served as the inspiration for a blue-and-white porcelain canteen produced at Jingdezhen in the fifteenth century, also in the Freer collection.¹⁷ This observation is partially but not entirely correct. There are eight known porcelain canteens¹⁸:

1. The Freer porcelain canteen (F1958.2).
2. A similar one sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong in 1999.¹⁹
3. A porcelain canteen at the National Palace Museum, Taiwan.²⁰
4. A similar one sold at Christie's London in 2007.²¹
5. Four canteens of differing sizes in the Palace Museum, Beijing. One has its contemporary lid with a bud-shaped finial, originally attached by a chain.²²

The eight canteens share common aspects: first, though their scale and blue-and-white painted decoration varies, the shape and configuration of their necks and handles do not. This strongly suggests that though they may copy each other,



6

6
Front of the porcelain canteen,
Freer Gallery of Art, F1958.2.



7

7
Back of the porcelain canteen,
Freer Gallery of Art, F1958.2.

all are derived from a single, shared brass model that differs in some significant details from the Freer canteen.²³ Second, most of the porcelain canteens survive in imperial Chinese collections, suggesting that they were perceived as significant objects—not necessarily Islamic ones—and were not created as gifts or commercial items aimed at Muslim diplomatic and trading partners.²⁴ Third, although the painted decoration on the canteens comprises standard Ming floral and wave motifs, the bands of decoration appear to respect the separate registers found on the brass model as well as, in some cases, incorporating motifs inspired by its inlay, for example an eight-pointed star motif (fig. 6) on the central boss. Fourth, on the flat, unglazed side of the porcelain canteens (fig. 7), there is an artifact of a central boss that is slightly depressed or concave, but there is no conical void, or “socket.”²⁵

From these observations, one can surmise that though the porcelain canteens copy an inlaid brass canteen, the model was not the Freer canteen, but a second canteen (and there may have been others). The porcelain canteens were rare objects, not widely circulated; it may be significant that none have survived in the great Ottoman and Safavid collections. While it is possible that the porcelain canteens were appreciated for their technical virtuosity and were collected in the imperial palace as exotic curiosities, it is more likely that the significance of the object was understood based on the person (or community) who took it to China, possibly as a gift to the emperor himself. Thus, at least one precious canteen was taken on a long journey—though surely not carried on the pommel of a saddle—but to China, not crusader Europe.²⁶

The Truncated Cone—A Proposal

The Chinese porcelain canteens appear to be faithful to the shape of an original brass model as well as to the layout—if not the content—of its inlaid decoration. Thus the concave disk found on their flat, unglazed sides seems significant. It can be inferred that the brass original also had a concave disk at the center of its flat side. The disk would have acted as a cover, concealing the interior of the canteen from view and comprising a fundamental element of its decorative program. In turn, it seems likely that the Freer canteen once had such a cover. The cover was probably inlaid with silver, like its counterpart on the other side. Its decoration, like that of

the other major portions of the canteen, would have been well planned in advance and laid out by means of a cartoon.

The domed side of the canteen is conceptually tripartite with a central medallion containing an image of the Virgin Hodegetria with other figures, and three scenes from the Life of Christ culminating in the Entry into Jerusalem. This program is essentially narrative. The back is quite different: two registers without intervening text hover around the hollow center, the outer comprising a row of saints and an Annunciation scene—linking back to front—and the inner comprising mounted knights, some clearly crusaders, with fully caparisoned horses, and others bearing lances, crossbows, and pennants, engaged in infinitely circular pursuit.²⁷ The back has a wordless visual impact. It is a symbol, a puzzle or rebus of opposites: active and passive, standing and moving, celestial and terrestrial. The mind that created it surely chose an arresting image for the central boss, one that would have resolved the polarity. A possibility is the Crucifixion, the potent inverse of the Hodegetria, an axis mundi that unites heaven and earth.²⁸

Behind the concave boss that may have borne an image of the Crucifixion was a chamber formed by the truncated cone, a vessel that in length nearly reaches the opposite end of the canteen. Its specificity of shape and size must echo the form of the object it once held. The conical shape with straight sides suggests a glass beaker, perhaps from Syria.²⁹

Contexts

While there might be no better pairing than a glass beaker for drinking and a canteen for holding water, given the eccentricities of the object and its superb decoration, a scenario requiring some interpretation is likely. Still, the symbolism may be more literal than previously assumed: the form of the canteen implies something carried to or from pilgrimage, the inlaid scenes from the Life of Christ evoke a place, Jerusalem, while the encircling protection of crusader knights around the inner vessel suggests its precious contents: a relic brought to Iraq from the tomb of Christ.³⁰

The canteen is a magnificent object. If it was made as a reliquary, the relic must have been something perceived as extraordinarily precious, requiring magnification, elevation, and protection. But, as the structural evidence shows, the canteen was not conceived only as a symbol but also as an object of practical use. The form of the canteen would lend itself well to the production of secondary relics; liquid would have swirled within the canteen around the holy object at its core, and through its proximity, acquire sanctity. The resulting liquid could have been decanted, bottled, and distributed for its healing powers.³¹

If the canteen was intended as a reliquary, it is also necessary to reconsider its hybrid design in light of this. If the seated drinkers, musicians, and pairs of birds



8

8
Nativity, Syrian Orthodox Lectionary,
dated 1220 or 1260 CE. © 2011,
Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,
MS Syriaco 559, f.16a.

in knotted roundels on the soldered strip—which may be a later repair—are put to one side, then what is left is the juxtaposition of Christian imagery, secular titles, and good wishes to the owner in Arabic, along with the animated inscription and fillers of knotted roundels with birds and quadrupeds. These various elements sample from Muslim and Christian traditions conceived together in a context in which such composite decoration was plausible.

An association of the canteen may be made with Jerusalem—or a Jerusalem component such as a relic—through the tripartite scenes on the front showing Christ's Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, and Entry into Jerusalem, and on the rear by the frieze showing heavy and light cavalry, including five horses with crusader-style horse armor.³² A particular anomaly in the Nativity scene, however, strongly suggests it was originally intended for a Jazīran audience.³³

It is generally agreed that the Christological iconography on the Freer canteen closely resembles the thirteenth-century illustrated manuscript tradition of the Eastern Christian churches, and in particular the Vatican Library's Syrian Orthodox Lectionary (MS Syriaco 559) copied at the Monastery of Mār Mattai near Mosul.³⁴ However, the canteen's scenes include significant deviations from standard Eastern Christian iconography. One of these alterations was clearly intentional; others could be misinterpretations of prototypes or conceivably carelessness, although this seems unlikely in an object produced to such a high artistic standard—an understanding of the iconography should be distinguished from the craft skills required to reproduce it on metalwork. These alterations help to localize the object and contribute to piecing together a context or process for its manufacture.

The most significant iconographic deviation on the canteen is the replacement of the three kings in a standard Nativity scene—as in the Vatican Lectionary (fig. 8)—by the figure of a mounted Saljūq atabeg, wearing the traditional headgear of authority, the *sharbūsh*, accompanied by a mounted body guard (fig. 9).³⁵ A sub-



9

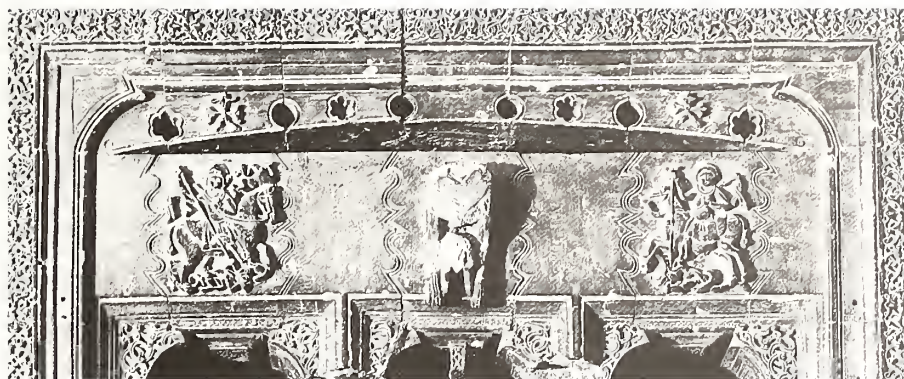
9

Detail, Nativity scene, Freer canteen.

stitution of this kind is more likely to have occurred in a zone under atabeg rule, such as the Jazīra during the period of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū', than in a western Syrian Ayyūbid or crusader context.³⁶ Less controversial, but nonetheless unexpected, is replacing the ox and ass behind the manger, familiar to any Christian child, with three bovines. Misinterpretation of a decorative formula is suggested by crosses added to the surfaces of the three domes representing the Temple in Jerusalem in the Presentation scene (see fig. 1). Crosses on the Jewish Temple are clearly inappropriate, and some confusion with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre may have occurred. However, a comparison with the same scene in the Vatican Lectionary, suggests that cross formations in decorative tile work depicted on domes in some thirteenth-century manuscripts may have been innocently assumed to be religiously significant.³⁷

This adaptive approach to Christian iconography, alongside bands of titles in Arabic and secular design motifs, suggests that while the designer, probably a Christian, may have produced an accurate cartoon based on manuscript models, the metalworker, possibly a Muslim, was not necessarily wholly familiar with the Christian pictorial canon. It follows, then, that whoever paid for this elaborate and costly object did not check it for adherence to the strictest codes of Christian iconographic orthodoxy or feel that it was necessary. In addition, the presence of benedictory inscriptions and titles in Arabic, rather than Syriac, suggests that the canteen was commissioned by a lay person rather than a cleric and not designed for use in the strictest of liturgical contexts.³⁸

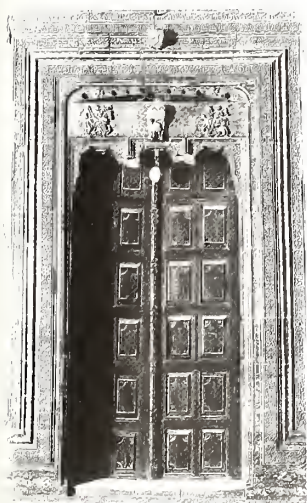
The Jazīra in the period of the so-called "Syriac Renaissance," circa 1150–1300, coincided with a period of particularly porous cultural boundaries.³⁹ For example, some thirty kilometers southeast of Mosul lies the shrine of Dayr Mār Behnam the Martyr⁴⁰; known also as Dayr al-Khiḍr and Dayr al-Khiḍr Ilyās, it was revered equally by Christians, Muslims, Jews, Yazidis, and Mongols. From its foundation around 382 CE, at the site where a local Christian prince of Ashur, Behnam, was martyred with his sister Sara and their retinue, the martyrium became a place of popular pilgrimage famed for its miracles. Its spring with healing waters was deemed particularly efficacious for skin complaints and epilepsy. The shrine also became associated with the biblical Elijah (Ilyās), and the Koranic prophet al-Khiḍr, both of whom hold strong associations with water and longevity. Special veneration was afforded to the Virgin Mary, to whom a chapel was dedicated decorated with inscriptions in both Syriac and Arabic; also to Mār Mattai, who con-



10B

10A, 10B

Royal Gate, between nave and narthex, Dayr Mār Behnam, Iraq, 13th-century. Photos courtesy of Iraq Department of Antiquities and Dr. Christel Kessler.



10A

verted and baptized Behnam, and to Saint George (Ḥaḍrat Jirjīs), the warrior saint *par excellence* of the Eastern Christian churches and Muslims, having lived before the coming of Islam. According to Arab historians such as Ṭabarī, Saint George was martyred in Mosul in the fourth century CE during the persecutions of Diocletian.⁴¹ Bas-reliefs of two warrior saints, probably Saint George and Mār Behnam, above the so-called Royal Gate in the east wall of the nave (fig. 10a), may date from renovations and embellishments carried out at the shrine between approximately 1233 and 1259.⁴² The shrine was also famed for its treasures, which were looted by Mongols in 1295.⁴³ However, an inscription not only records their safe return by order of the Il-Khān Baydū, it also states that the only objects of value not taken by the looters were the Gospels displayed on the altar and the reliquary of the saint, from which “God turned away their eyes.”⁴⁴ This attests to the presence of at least one reliquary in the shrine at that time.

The figures on either side of the enthroned Virgin in the concave roundel on the front of the canteen (fig. 11) are correctly attired to represent, on the left, a turbaned saint or perhaps patron—albeit standing rather than kneeling—with hands raised in the *orans* posture and, on the right, a bare-headed patriarch. If the latter is Elijah/Ilyās, then the cone-shaped object in his right hand, may represent the “high mountain” on the top of which he appeared with Moses, flanking Christ at the Transfiguration, when the voice of God was heard naming Jesus as His son.⁴⁵

The chivalric exercises shown on the back of the canteen suggest the ideals of the warrior saints venerated by crusaders and Muslims alike as supporters in the ongoing battle of good against evil and the quest for salvation. Since Mosul’s army, on occasion, fought in Syria alongside the Ayyūbids, and there was a trading community of Nestorian Christians from Mosul established in Acre, known as “mosserins,” crusader-style caparisoning of horses would have been familiar. On the canteen, although the horses and riders may appear accoutered for war, crusaders are not depicted confronting Muslim foes in battle order, no bloodletting is apparent, and Christians are not shown as victors. Dimand was the first to note that the mounted warriors in this frieze appear to be European Christians, probably crusaders, with the exception of one turbaned figure at whom a crusader is aiming a crossbow. However, since the headgear interpreted by Dimand as a turban is also worn by a standing saint in the register above them, all the riders in the lower register also appear to be Christians. A comparison with equestrian warrior saints at Dayr Mār Behnam supports this reading and relates it to an established Jaziran pictorial repertoire (fig. 10b). While standing figures in the outer register suggest



11

11
Detail, Enthroned Virgin and Child
(Virgin Hodegetria), the Freer
canteen.

those already counted among the heavenly elect, the cavalry may represent the ongoing struggle on Earth below. Protection is invoked for the canteen—especially that which was borne in its interior chamber—and by extension for beneficiaries of the liquid contents of the flask surrounding it.⁴⁶

The Shrine of Mār Behnam is associated with healing water. The inscription on the neck of the canteen reads: *al-akram* [handle] *al-āfiya* [handle] (... the noblest/most precious good health/well-being); and the canteen is in the form of a pilgrim flask.⁴⁷ It seems plausible, therefore, that the inscription could refer to the dispensing of *barakat*-rich liquid to pilgrims visiting such a shrine. The example of Dayr Mār Behnam cogently demonstrates that in the thirteenth century, Mosul and its environs were not only famed for the manufacture of inlaid metalwork, but also provided contexts appropriate for secular patronage of religiously inspired Christian objects that memorialize political and cultural realities of the time.

The Freer canteen bears the hallmarks of a Jazīran object, made for a Jazīran public, who were likely to gather at a particular shrine or monastery, possibly Dayr Mār Behnam or Dayr Mār Mattai. It was made to house something extraordinarily precious, something that was thought to provide *barakat* and possibly good health, and more profoundly, focus the mind on salvation itself. Its decorative program points to something Christological and, more important, something associated with Jerusalem. The container that held this relic was beaker-shaped, which, in turn, may suggest a liquid content—possibly oil from the lamp that burned over the tomb of Christ. Water that swirled in the canteen around such a relic would acquire its salvific qualities, a benefit that may have been sought after by Christians and Muslims alike. Physical evidence shows that the canteen was used enough for it to have been carefully repaired when a split appeared in its seams.

The hybridity of the design elements suggests that the canteen was not an internal, ecclesiastical commission. Rather it was one made for a lay person, perhaps

as a donation to a holy place, with the figure to the left of the Virgin Hodegetria on the central concave boss representing a turbaned donor. The substitution of a *sharbūshed* ruler for one of the three kings who attended the infant Christ, reminds us that the thirteenth-century Jazīra was a time when members of the Christian intelligentsia achieved high office in the service of Muslim rulers, irrespective of confessional affiliation.⁴⁸ Perhaps such a high-ranking member of society commissioned the canteen? Questions remain to be answered, but what is undeniable is that it ranks among the most arresting pieces of medieval metalwork to have reached our times.

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NOTES

- 1 The ideas for this study originated in a seminar on the Freer canteen held at the Freer Gallery of Art in 2003. The participants included Julian Raby, Massumeh Farhad, Teresa Fitzherbert, Heather Ecker, and Amy Landau. A workshop on the same was held at the HIAA *majlis* in 2010 with a much larger group. Some of the ideas expressed by our colleagues are cited here as we remember or have recorded them; we apologise for any lapses in this regard. We would like to thank all of our friends for their many conversations with us, in particular Julian Raby, for his generous exchanges over a long period of time.
- 2 The principal studies include: Michelangelo Lanci, *Trattato delle simboliche rappresentanze Arabiche e della varia generazione de' Musulmani caratteri sopra differenti materie operati*, vol. 2, pp. 141–45, vol. 3, pls. XLV–XLVI (Parigi: Stamperia orientale di Dondey-Dupré, 1845); Maurice Dimand, “A silver inlaid bronze canteen with Christian subjects in the Eumorfopoulos Collection,” *Ars Islamica* 1 (1934), pp. 17–21; Laura Schneider, “The Freer Canteen,” *Ars Orientalis* 9 (1973), pp. 137–56; Renee Katzenstein and Glenn Lowry, “Christian themes in thirteenth-century Islamic metalwork,” *Muqarnas* 1 (1983), pp. 53–68; Esin Atil, W. T. Chase, and Paul Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC, 1985), pp. 124–33; Eva Baer, *Ayyubid Metalwork with Christian Images* (Leiden, 1989); Nuha Khoury, “Narratives of the Holy Land: Memory, identity and inverted imagery in the Freer Basin and Canteen,” *Orientations* (May 1998), pp. 63–69; Eva Hoffman, “Christian-Islamic Encounters on thirteenth-century Ayyubid metalwork: Local culture, authenticity and memory,” *Gesta* 43 (2004), pp. 129–42; Bas Snelders and Matt Immerzeel, “The thirteenth-century flabellum from Deir al-Surian in the Musée Royal de Mariemont (Morlanwelz, Belgium),” *Eastern Christian Art in Its Late Antique and Islamic Contexts* 1 (2004), pp. 113–39; Bas Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction: Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area* (Leiden, 2010).
- 3 The canteen, acc. no. F1941.10 (45.2 x 21.5 x 21.5 cm), was purchased by the Freer Gallery of Art from Hagop Kevorkian, New York. In 1845, it was in the collection of Prince Filippo Andrea Doria, when it was published by Michelangelo Lanci. By at least 1934, when it was published by Maurice Dimand, the canteen formed part of the Eumorfopoulos Collection, London.
- 4 Julian Raby, “The Principle of Parsimony and the Problem of ‘the Mosul School of Metalwork,’” in *Metalwork and Material Culture in the Islamic World: Art, Craft and Text. Essays presented to James W. Allan*, ed. Venetia Porter and Mariam Rosser-Owen (London, 2012 forthcoming); special thanks are due to Julian Raby for access to his article.
- 5 The concavity of the roundel would assist stability if the vessel was placed on its front, possibly also to facilitate access to the back.
- 6 David S. Rice, “Studies in Islamic metalwork—III,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953), pp. 235–37, pl. 8; on the identification of the knights as fighting Crusaders, see Dimand 1934, p. 17.
- 7 It may or may not be significant that the neck is off-center to the right both in relation to the Hodegetria, as well as the standing figures of Gabriel and the Virgin in the Annunciation scene under the colonnade on the reverse. Could this off-center position facilitate right-hand

access to the mouth of the vessel during ritual use?

8 The strip, with its apparently secular decoration of seated drinkers and musicians, has always proved difficult to explain in the context of the canteen's ecclesiastical program. It is often compared to the d'Arenberg Basin (Freer, F1955.10), which also has mixed sacred and secular themes. However, there is no evidence of replacement or repair on the basin, while on the canteen there is. The basin's mixture of sacred and secular scenes is clearly intentional, but its purpose may be very different. An analysis of the metallurgical compositions of both the silver and the brass on the strip and domed section of the canteen would be useful in this regard, as well as additional radiographs of the joining of the components.

9 See Raby 2012 on this image, considered variously to be the emblem of Mosul, or the coat of arms of its ruler, Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū'. Information on the three roundels from personal communication with Julian Raby.

10 We are grateful to Rachel Ward for her comments in this regard.

11 Of course, we may be mistaken about the transposition of the placement of the neck and handles on the original to the replacement—the displacement to the neck to the right with respect to the two images of the Virgin (Hodegetria and Annunciation) may simply represent a misalignment of the two major components of the canteen, the domed section and the flat plate, as a result of the repair.

12 Schneider 1973, p. 153; Atil et al. 1985, p. 125; Khoury 1998, pp. 63–64.

13 In April 2011, Ecker asked Prof. Frye about the canteens he saw in Samarkand, and he recalled that they were made of stone. Whatever the mechanism for pouring was and whatever the container,

they do not seem to represent convincing parallels for the canteen.

14 Baer 1989, p. 48; Khoury 1998, p. 66; and see Atil et al. 1985, p. 133.

15 Baer 1989, p. 45.

16 Schneider 1973, p. 153.

17 Atil et al. 1985, p. 133. The Freer Gallery purchased the porcelain canteen (F1958.2) in 1958 from John Sparks, Ltd., London, which had bought it at the Clare de Pinna sale, Sotheby's London, October 29, 1957. Its previous provenance is unknown.

18 The porcelain canteens are clearly related to, but not identical to the *bianhu*, or moon-flasks, that were produced at Jingdezhen in some quantity from the Yongle to Qing periods. The moon-flasks, smaller than the canteens, which are unusually large, usually stand on a footring, whether square or oval, and interestingly, have bulbous necks and slight handles that are similar to those of the Freer canteen. They are assumed to imitate a Near Eastern metalwork prototype which is assumed to be Syrian. The misidentification of the place of origin of the Freer canteen as Syria may have contributed to this argument, and to some confusion between these different though related types. See for example British Museum, reg. no. 1968,0422.29.

19 Sotheby's Hong Kong, November 1, 1999, Sale HK0154, lot 311. Some doubts have been raised as to the authenticity of this example.

20 *Mingdai chu nian ciqi tezhan mulu* (National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1982), no. 1.

21 Christie's London, November 6, 2007, Sale 7431, lot 156.

22 *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum*, vol. 34, *Blue and White with Underglaze Red* (1) (Commercial Press, Hong Kong, 2000), nos. 34,

35, 36, and 37. Number 37 is the only one that retains its original lid. See also Geng Bochang, *Ming Qing ciqi jian ding* (Beijing: Forbidden City Publishing, 1993), p. 24, figs. 39, 54; Rosemary Scott, "A very rare early Ming blue and white flask, bianhu," *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art Including Export Art*, Christie's London auction catalogue, November 6, 2007, lot 156.

23 The differences can be summarized as: a convex central boss instead of a concave one, no void on the back, three ridges imitating leather welts and not four, the position of the neck within a single side-strip and not on the lower of two, loop handles and different type of tubular neck (although we have argued that the neck and handles on the Freer canteen are not the original ones).

24 This is not to say that only porcelain pieces that copied shapes derived from Islamic metalwork were exported or offered diplomatically to Muslim clients and dignitaries. However, such pieces did typically find their way into Middle Eastern collections. One might cite a Yongle-period blue-and-white porcelain ewer now in the British Museum (1963,1219.1) that is clearly derived from an Islamic prototype. Two such ewers are also found at the Ardabil Shrine. Furthermore, unlike the canteens, two *bianhu* flasks form part of the Ardabil collection.

25 This very crucial observation was made by Massumeh Farhad in 2003.

26 There are two plausible means by which the canteen was taken to China: by an ecclesiastical mission or as booty. The Nestorian community and its missions in China were active in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, protected by the Yuan dynasty, which had long been allied through marriage with Nestorian Christian families. While the compara-

- tive manuscript evidence point to a Syrian orthodox origin for the canteen, it may come from a Nestorian context instead. If a relic was contained in this second, brass canteen, it does suggest a slightly different scenario than the endowment to a shrine or monastery in the Jazīra, such as Dayr Mār Behnam, proposed below. Instead, a relic might have been brought from the Middle East for the purpose of founding of a church. How it came to, or came into contact with, the imperial treasury instead is an intriguing question.
- 27 Or possibly crusader-inspired depictions of Eastern saints.
- 28 On the absence of these themes: Khoury 1998; Hoffman 2004, p. 132; the Syriac lectionaries discussed below (British Library Add.7170 and Vatican Library MS Syriaco 559) that provided models for the canteen's extant iconography are the likely source of the crucifixion image; an alternative icon that might have occupied the roundel is the Ascension of Christ, an illustration of which is also found in BAV MS Syriaco 559, f. 174b, and in BL Add. 7170, f. 188a. Christ is shown being borne to heaven in an oval ring sustained by four angels. The figure in an oval could have adapted well for a boss decoration, and synchronize with the inner and outer rings as "Church Militant" and "Church Triumphant."
- 29 We thank Julian Raby for this suggestion. The beaker would have had straight sides, thus dating to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century before the fashion for flaring profiles became prevalent. See the proposed chronology in Summer S. Kenneson, "Islamic enameled beakers: a new chronology," in *Gilded and Enamelled Glass from the Middle East*, ed. Rachel Ward (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp. 45–49.
- 30 Dimand 1934, p. 17; between the Treaty of Jaffa (1229) and the Khwarezmian sack of Jerusalem (1244), crusading orders regained their limited purpose as the guardians of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. As discussed below, this period falls well within the plausible timeframe for the manufacture of the canteen.
- 31 *The Travels of Marco Polo* suggests one kind of relic that might have been available and sought after in Jerusalem in the thirteenth century: "He [the Grand Khan] moreover signified his pleasure that upon their return they should bring with them from Jerusalem, some of the holy oil from the lamp which is kept burning over the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he professed to hold in veneration and to consider as the true God." *The Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian*, trans. W. Marsden, revised by T. Wright and P. Harris, Everyman's Library, no. 313 (New York: Knopf, 2008), pp. 20–22. While beaker-reliquaries have not yet been identified in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, they have survived in other contexts, for example, the beaker-reliquary found in the Church at Mattsee (V&A, acc. no C.280-1936), that contains the bones of St. Laurentius and bears the seal of Sigmund, bishop of Salona, suffragan bishop of Passau. It has been dated to circa 1450.
- 32 Schneider 1973, pp. 143–45, pl. 1, fig. 2.
- 33 Fitzherbert owes Rachel Ward and James Allan particular thanks for discussions on Jazīran metalwork.
- 34 The colophon date read by Leroy as 1220 was subsequently reread by Fiey as 1260; Jules Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: contribution à l'étude de l'iconographie des Eglises de langue syriaque* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1964), pp. 301–2; Jean-Maurice Fiey, "Hulagu, Doquz Khatun ... et Six Ambons?" *Le Muséon* 88 (1975), pp. 59–64. Rima Smine is reconsidering the date of this manuscript in her forthcoming thesis. Fitzherbert is indebted to Sebastian Brock and Pier Giorgio Borbone for their advice.
- 35 Schneider noted the *sharbūsh* but associated it with Mamluk Cairo, on the basis of a single woodblock print, despite Rice having previously argued against it being typically Mamluk, but closely associated with areas under Seljuq-Zengid domination, particularly Upper Mesopotamia, where it appears not only in paintings but also on metalwork, glass, pottery, stucco and coins; Schneider 1973, pp. 139 and n. 4; Rice 1957, p. 324 and n. 19. Atil and Snelders also mention the *sharbūsh* but do not discuss it in relation to other anomalies in the iconography; Atil et al. 1985, p. 126; Snelders 2010, pp. 360–61.
- 36 Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū' assumed the regency in AH 607/1210 CE, received a caliphal investiture to rule in his own right in AH 631/1233 CE and died in AH 657/1259 CE, having governed from Mosul for nearly fifty years; a *terminus ante quem* for the *sharbūsh* as emblematic of authority in Mosul would be the city's sack by the Mongols in AH 660/1262 CE, and the flight of the son of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū', al-Sālih Ismā'il, to the Mamlūks. Tripartite decoration, as on the front of the canteen, is typical of brasses known to have been made for Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū'; David Storm Rice, "The Brasses of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū'," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13, no. 3 (1950), pp. 627–34 and pl. 13. In addition, the use of his portrait is attested in four surviving frontispieces to the twenty-volume copy of the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, text completed in AH 616/1219 CE; David Storm Rice, "The

Aghānī Miniatures and Religious Painting in Islam, *Burlington Magazine* 95 (1953), pp. 128–34; S. M. Stern, “A New Volume of the Illustrated Aghānī Manuscript,” *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 501–3.

- 37 Leroy 1964, p. 81, fig. 4. Other anomalies include the Virgin by the manger depicted without a clearly defined head-covering, and Christ shown riding a horse or mule into Jerusalem rather than an ass; Fitzherbert is grateful to Robert Hillenbrand for this discussion. It is also worth noting that the unusually stiff and unbending posture of the Christ Child, propped on the lap of the Virgin Hodegetria in the central roundel, is closer to that in the Vatican Lectionary than to other Syriac manuscript examples; see Leroy 1964, p. 77, figs. 4 and 3, where Hodegetria images from the Vatican Lectionary and the British Library’s Syriac Lectionary (Add. 7170), dateable to 1216–20, are juxtaposed. For a detailed discussion of Syrian Orthodox iconography on metalwork and in manuscripts from the Mosul area, see Snelders 2010, pp. 103–50 and pp. 151–213.

- 38 For example, inscriptions on the two brass flabella made in Mosul in 1202 for the Dayr al-Suriani in the Wadi Natrun (Egypt) bear inscriptions in Syriac only, and are clearly ecclesiastical commissions; see Snelders and Immerzeel 2004 and Raby 2012.

- 39 On the “Syrian (or Syriac) renaissance,” see Snelders 2010, especially pp. 68–73.

- 40 For the fullest coverage of Dayr Mār Behnam, see Snelders 2010, pp. 257–335, appendices A and B, pp. 553–570, and pls. 33–65. See also Afram Abdal, *Some Historical Vestiges of the Convent of St. Behnam the Martyr near Mosul* (Beirut: Syriac Catholic Patriarchy of Antioch, 1954), and Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History*

of Assyrian Christianity (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 102–3.

- 41 For the linking, and often conflation, of al-Khiḍr, Elijah, Ilyās, Saint George, and Mār Behnam, see Ethel Sara Wolper, “Khiḍr and the Changing Frontiers of the Medieval World,” *Medieval Encounters* 17 (2011), pp. 120–146; for the shrine of Mār Behnam, see especially pp. 139–142.
- 42 Snelders 2010, p. 275, and on the syncretistic nature of these sculptures, pp. 301–5.
- 43 Afram Abdal, *Some Historical Vestiges of the Convent of St. Behnam the Martyr near Mosul* (Beirut: Syriac Catholic Patriarchy of Antioch, 1954), pp. 4–5ff., and Baumer, *The Church of the East*, pp. 102–3.
- 44 Snelders 2010, appendix B, p. 566, Inscription AE.01.20.
- 45 Matthew 17:1–12, Mark 9: 2–13, Luke 9: 28–36; Elijah is not usually signified by a mountain, but in the Vatican Lectionary, Christ, Elijah and Moses are shown each standing on separate hill tops; Leroy 1964, p. 98, fig. 2.
- 46 See Douglas Patton, *Badr al-Dīn Lū’lū’, Atabeg of Mosul, 1211–1259* (Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 1991), p. 20; Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader manuscript illumination at Saint Jean d’Acre, 1275–1291* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 5; for evidence of the crusader presence in Mosul itself, see also Raby, “The Principle of Parsimony.” On mounted warriors as European Christians, see Dimand 1937, p. 17 and n. 1.
- 47 Although the canteen’s neck is not likely to be the original, like its pearl border, the inscription may well echo that which preceded it. Since Dayr Mār Behnam was famed for its healing waters, the possibility of the truncated cone holding a beaker for dispensing it also invites consideration.

- 48 For example, Bar Hebraeus describes the case of the Christian physician Amīn al-Dawla Tāōma and his three sons, Shams al-Dawla, Fakhr al-Dawla, and Tāj al-Dawlah, who attained “great honours” at the court of the caliph al-Nāṣir (reigned 575–622/1180–1225), *The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l-Faraj son of Aaron, The Hebrew Physician commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, vol. 1, facsimile repr., trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), pp. 385–86.



1



2



3

EVENT AND MEMORY

*The Freer Gallery's Siege Scene Plate***Abstract**

The large enamel-painted (so-called *haft rang/mina'i*) plate in the Freer Gallery depicts the successful siege of a castle on the front and hunting feats on the back. This study proposes an interpretation of the plate, its time, and its intended audience. The front of the plate portrays a complex narrative of a battle and names the victors—Turkish emirs who played key roles in the incessant skirmishes, fort takeovers, and battles in the regions of northwest Iran. It can be assumed that one (or all) of the seven named emirs was the patron or the intended audience for this commemorative scene. The defenders of the fortress are presented through a series of discrete events that culminate in the disastrous loss of their leader. Although the visual narration stresses the specificity of the siege, the event is not mentioned in the main historic texts of the period. Thus, the task of the art historian is not only to propose an interpretation of the image but also to attempt a reconstruction of the region's history.

A detailed examination of the inscription on the rim has enabled the identification of the area where the event took place—the Tarom Mountains on the border between (Iranian) Azerbaijan and Daylam. This paper explores two different possibilities for dating the event and, therefore, the subsequent manufacture of the plate. The first possibility situates the siege among the exploits and adventures of Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnu, the last Khwarazmshah, during the 1220s. The alternative, driven more by the accepted internal chronologies and stylistic variations of Kashan as a ceramic production center, locates the event earlier within the narratives of the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.

A MUCH-REPRODUCED MONUMENT OF ISLAMIC ART is the large plate, painted with overglaze enamels (*haft rang/mina'i*) in the Freer Gallery of Art (F1943.3; figs. 1, 2).¹ It depicts the siege of a castle on the obverse and a series of hunters on the reverse. Its size, epigraphic program, and complex pictorial composition make this plate particularly fascinating. Forty-three centimeters in diameter, it is the largest *haft rang/mina'i* plate in existence. It exhibits a striking variety of figure types, landscape motifs, and architectural elements, and inscriptions identify the principal protagonists. Although very fragmentary and much restored, the original dimensions, profile (fig. 3), and pictorial and epigraphic program have now been completely verified as result of a close reexamination of both its body and its decoration.² This study proposes a more definitive analysis of the images on both the obverse and reverse, and the milieu in which the plate and its visual program were commissioned and produced.



4

4
Detail of the obverse center, showing
the victor and the vanquished.



5

5
Amir Sābiq al-Dīn.

Facing the Siege

The physical and visual center of the siege scene is occupied only by a bird. Two figures bracket it, and in their stances the kernel of the story is revealed: victory for the besiegers and defeat for the besieged (fig. 4). To the bird's right rides the leader of the attacking army, specifically identified by title and name as Lord (*khudāvand*, actually *khudhāvand*) Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn (خداوند مظفرالدوله و الدين). On the left, the nameless leader of the besieged falls from the parapet of his castle, his body pierced by two arrows. The victorious army converges on this central space in six files, five across the field of the plate and one circling the rim. Seven warriors are identified by name:

The lone horseman in the lowermost file is Amīr Sābiq al-Dīn (امير سابق الدين) (fig. 5).

Above him ride Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīr Berīg/Barīk (بهاالدين محمد شیر باریک), Shams al-Dīn Ilyās (شمس الدين الياس), and Beg Arslān Ūshi (بيک ارسلان اوشی) (fig. 6).

Following the leader of the attacking army are Shams [al-Dī]n Menglibeh(?) (شمس [الد]ن منكليبه) and two unnamed riders (fig. 7).

The next rank consists of ...[al-Dī]n Muḥammad ... (...[الد]ن محمد...) ..., M.ḥaṭ.reh(?) Pīsar-i Langar (مخاطره (؟) پسر لنگر) (fig. 7) and two unnamed horsemen.

In the top rank of the field, three unnamed horsemen are less carefully aligned.

Of the named riders, the three at the bottom, Amīr Sābiq al-Dīn, Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīr Berīg, and Shams al-Dīn Ilyās—as well as their leader, Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn, are also differentiated by size, beard, and costume to give them special prominence. Scattered among the horsemen are four foot soldiers and, in the topmost rank, an elephant with its attendant and a small, semi-nude figure of a drummer with armlets. On the rim, bands of horsemen alternate with groups of archers and scenes of single combat. Throughout the composition, the dead lie scattered underfoot, disrobed and dismembered.



6

Left to right: Bahā' al-Dīn
Muḥammad Shīr Berīg, Shams
al-Dīn Ilyās, and Beg Arslān Ūshī.



7

Shams [al-Dī]n Menglibeh(?) riding
behind the leader, Lord Muẓaffar al-
Dawla wa'l-Dīn; above and to the left:
... [al-Dī]n Muḥammad, M.ḥaṭ.reh(?)
Pisar-i Langar.

8

The fragmentary rim inscription.



8

On the lowest part of the preserved rim, written upside down in relation to the main action on the field of the plate, is a fragmentary line of a Persian text (fig. 8):

Transcription:

دگر بهالدين به خلخال رفته بودى... پسر لنگر در حق بهالدين تا قتلى بسيار
رفته بود [؟] لزرقه

Translation:

Then Bahā' al-Dīn went to Khalkhāl,

... Pisar-i Langar went immediately to join Bahā' al-Dīn in the fierce battle
[l.z.r.qah (?) or, less possible, az rūz (?)].³

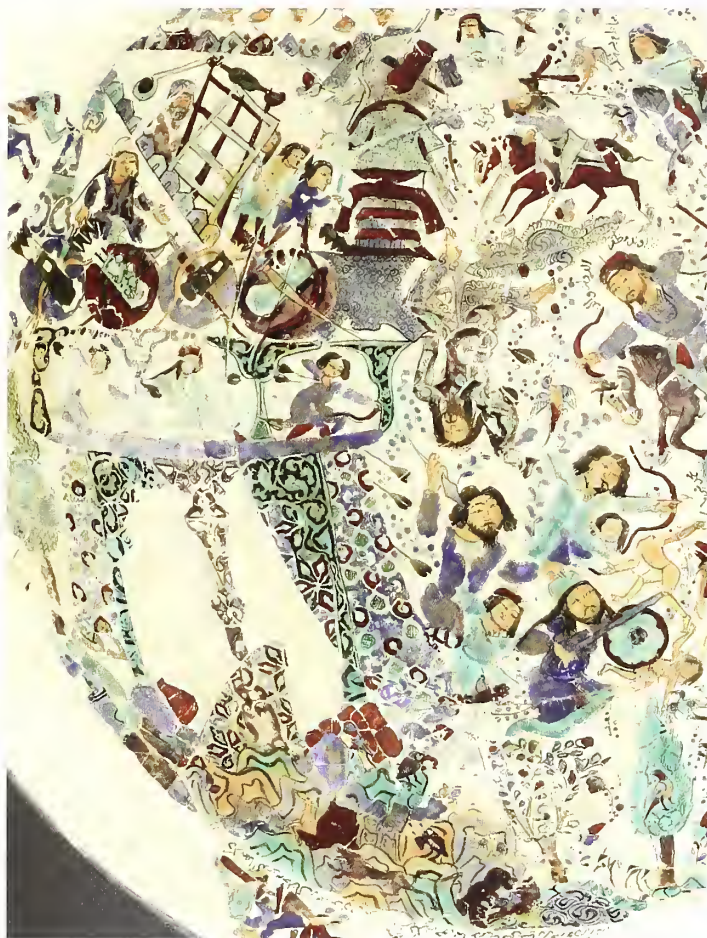
The beginning of the original inscription could not have been located in what is now the plaster infill area on the right, since immediately beyond it is an original piece of continuous rim and body without any writing. The area to the left of the remaining inscription has also been infilled with plaster. While one could suppose that the inscription extended the entire length of the latter infill, it seems that it formed a segment of a circle centered on the main scene and did not begin before the word “then” (*diger*), the beginning of the remaining phrase. Therefore, it would not be possible for all the warriors named on the field to have been mentioned again on the rim. As it is, the order, rank, and differentiation among the warriors in the main image are not mirrored in the rim text: Bahā' al-Dīn is prominently shown, but Pisar-i Langar is not, and the name of the

central victor, Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn, does not appear in the extant rim inscription.

The image and the text, then, do not follow one another's compositional imperatives. Judging even from the plate's fragmentary state, the message of the rim inscription is one of specific narration and does not seem to mirror the rhetorical turns of contemporary historical texts.⁴ The inscription also lacks the poetic allusions so common in those on other contemporary ceramic objects.⁵ It is a terse identification of an event (the battle), a place (Khalkhāl), and some of the attackers. Judging from its clear and pointed script, it was meant to be read or identified, at least originally. Its upside-down position may seem puzzling at first, but that can be explained when the sources for the image and the habits of ceramic decoration are considered (see below).

The location of the battle, Khalkhāl (on the southeastern border of Azerbaijan), is not only named on the rim but also might be represented in topographical detail. Shown as a mountainous landscape inhabited by animals, it presents the most extensive landscape in extant Persian images produced before the end of the thirteenth century (fig. 9).⁶ That fact alone would not have ensured immediate recognition of the locale. Iran is a mountainous country, and castles abounded on hill-tops. The coulisse-like contours of a rugged landscape inhabited by animals appear throughout pre- and post-Mongol imagery and would simply have been taken to connote the countryside.⁷ The elaboration of the surfaces of the castle walls on the plate may be significant, however. The walls were originally decorated in a pattern of interlocking geometric figures,⁸ and the central panel has a framing device similar to those used to indicate architecture on decorated ceramics such as the "Freer Beaker" (F1928.2) and in manuscripts like 'Ayyūqī's *Varqah va Gulshah*.⁹ Together, the two motifs recall the elaborately reveted architecture of northwestern Iran, which featured ornamented surfaces covered in colored tile plugs and inserts until genuine tile mosaics appeared at the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ This development has been amply documented on individual commemorative buildings, like the twelfth- through fourteenth-century group in Maragheh. Walls of large structures, citadels and congregational mosques, were apparently also developing color revetment, as is evident from the descriptions of the tile-enhanced walls of the early fourteenth-century citadel and congregational mosque at Sultaniyya, several days march to the southwest of Khalkhāl.¹¹

In contrast to the written and visual identification of the victors and location, pictorial devices alone were marshaled to depict the defeated army and the battle's progress. As was done for the location, elements of visual constructs from other sources were utilized and reordered to provide the necessary density of clues for recognition and meaning.¹² The leader of the besieged fortress, clothed not in



9

9
The fortress in its landscape setting.

armor but in a tunic and trousers, plummets to his death. His falling body, pierced by two arrows, is portrayed in a position similar to that of flying victories, but upside down.¹³ He is barefoot, a detail that might have been part of the flying-figure type in the visual repertoire, but may have special meaning here. In his right hand, he holds a weapon, a *zupin*, a short spear best known as a traditional weapon of the Daylamis and Gilanis.¹⁴ His disheveled hair and heavy beard also may have been intended as a sign of identity or distress.¹⁵ Immediately below his body, at the foot of the castle wall, crouch four members (three large and one smaller) of the defending army, carrying bow, spear, sword, and shield, while the ground in front is strewn with dismembered and disrobed bodies (fig. 10).¹⁶ Empty suits of armor, shields, and bows in cases line the castle battlements.¹⁷ On top of the castle, shown in birds' eye view, a mangonel/catapult is attended by two turbaned figures and three other helpers.¹⁸ Archers shoot from a lower gallery (fig. 9).

The victors are shown on the right in three-quarter view with bodies fully controlled, forever riding in their moment of victory. At the same time, the arrangement and the attention to detail on the left develops the story of the besieged's defeat in several discrete moments. Placing armor on the walls as a ruse to replace actual soldiers/defenders can be read as one moment.¹⁹ Another is the foray outside the castle walls, whose immediate motive may have been the retrieval of the despoiled bodies shown in front of the sortie party. The besieged leader's dramatic end can be understood as the last, decisive event of the battle.



The two parts of the plate play different roles in the presentation of the entire event. The right side shows the attacking army converging on the fortress and crystallized in a single, continuous, and final moment of victory. The left side summarizes the progress of the battle. The concerted attack from the right scatters the defenders on the left just as the attackers prevent their separate attempts to break the siege. The massive bulk of the fortress fills the left side and stays the visual thrust of the attack. Together, the two sides complete the narrative of the battle. The placement of the vanquished to the left and the victorious to the right must also have been significant, though for the moment there are no specific studies on this directional coding in the early and middle Islamic/Iranian visual culture context.²⁰

While some members of the besieged army have been differentiated visually, it is writing rather than pictorial details that ultimately identifies the key individuals of the victorious attacking army. In other words, the victors deserve to be named. The expressive force of the visual means, as well as the coherence and signifying capacity of the formal elements available to the decorator of the plate, were apparently deemed insufficient to circumvent reliance on the written word for a full identification of the scene. In fact, depictions of actual historical events rarely occur without direct association with text, unless these are otherwise constructed in a narrow cultural context.²¹

In the Realm of Heroes

The inscription band of customary good wishes on the reverse rim is decorated in a style similar to those on other *haft rang/nina'i* vessels.²² A frieze of hunters



11

11
Siege Scene Plate, reverse.

fills the plate's sloping sides (figs. 3, 11). Four individual feats are shown: the slaying of a dragon, the shooting of a quadruped, the clubbing of a feline (?), and the shooting of a griffin. Based on these legendary creatures, it is clear that these are no ordinary hunters, but epic heroes such as Bahram Gūr, Faridūn, Rostam, and others.²³ A pair of hunters completes the circle; one leads a cheetah and carries a bovine-headed mace, the marker for Faridūn.²⁴ The events and people depicted on the rim do not correspond in number to all the individuals named on the front of the plate. Yet four of the named warriors are singled out by size and dress: Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn, Amīr Sābiq al-Dīn, Shams al-Dīn Ilyās, and Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīr Berig/Barik. So while direct parallels between hunter and warrior cannot necessarily be drawn, the hunting scenes complete the plate's decorative program and draw a comparison between the legendary heroes on the back of the plate and the main warriors on the front. By juxtaposition, the deeds of the latter group are accorded the renown of the former. The epic and legendary validates the specific and historic; the distanced metaphor of rhetoric and poetics has been translated into physical reality.

The Location and Time of the Siege: Shifting Allegiances in Atabeg Realms

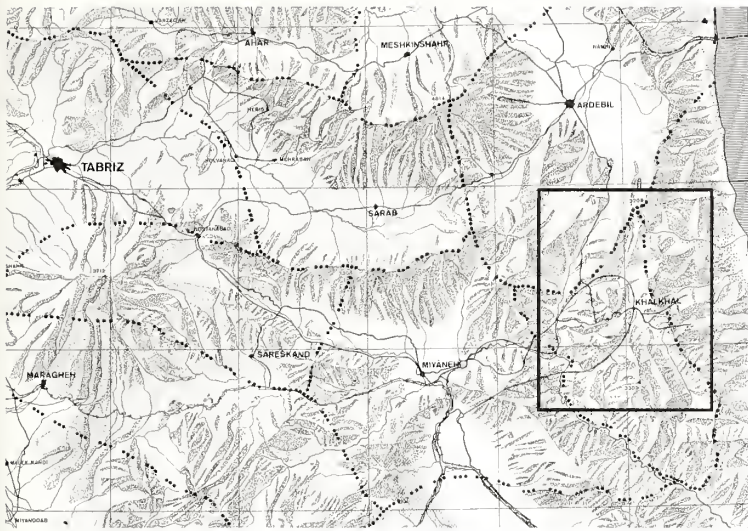
While the names of the warriors on the front of the plate have been deciphered and known for some time, as a group they are not found in any of the major historical sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The mixed Arabic, Persian, and Turkic elements of their names, however, indicate that they are members of the military class; the honorific title (*laqab*) is followed by the name (*ism*), and then the

epithet (*nisba* or *kunya*). Furthermore, the Persian title of the leader, *khudāvand* (lord), points to an Iranian setting for the event.²⁵ The fragmentary inscription on the rim mentions Khalkhāl; therefore, in the absence of any other written indication, we may assume that this location is the place of the siege.

Khalkhāl was the name given to both a town and a region in southeastern Azerbaijan, on the western border of Gilan and Daylam (figs. 12 and 13). A mountainous borderland region, its medieval, local history has proven difficult to reconstruct in great detail.²⁶ According to the AH seventh-century/thirteenth-century CE geographer Yaqut, the Khalkhāl region had several fortresses, among them Balak and Firuzabad, while the town and fortress of Khalkhāl itself lay between two mountains and was seven days ride from Qazvin and two from Zanjan. Yaqut's is an eyewitness report, as he crossed the area while fleeing from the Mongols. Passing through the region a century later, Qazwīnī found the town of Khalkhāl in ruins.²⁷ Geographical and historical information is very sparse about this region, particularly during the last years of the twelfth century and the early thirteenth, although by assembling what is known about Azerbaijan in general, one may be able to understand the general outlines of its history.

In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries CE, three significant forces emerged in the region: the Great Seljuq atabegs ("tutors"), the Isma'ilis, and the Khwarazmshahs. The Seljuk atabeg dynasty of the Eldegüzids controlled Azerbaijan and, at times, large parts of Jibāl (the Uplands). The Eldegüzids took their name from Shams al-Dīn Eldegüz/Īldegöz (circa AH 530–571/1136–1175 CE), who maintained all of Azerbaijan as his own domain from about AH 540/1146 CE, and extended it through the province of Iraq. He served as atabeg to the Seljuk princes, Arslān-Shāh b. Toghril and Malik-Shah b. Saljuq, and added greatly to his prestige by marrying Mu'mina Khatun, the mother of Arslān-Shāh (and widow of the Great Seljuk sultan Tughril b. Muḥammad b. Malikshah). Eldegüz's sons were thus closely connected to the main Seljuk line, which gave them sufficient status to develop a court culture as well as the power and license to interfere in succession disputes and deflect any moves against their control of western Iran. Those sons, Nusrat al-Dīn Muḥammad Jahān Pahlavān (died 1187 CE) and Muẓaffar al-Dīn Qizil Arslān 'Uthman (died 1191 CE), served as atabegs to the last of the Great Seljuk sultans of Iran, Tughril (reigned 1176–94 CE).²⁸ Jahān Pahlavān expanded and maintained his own corps of mamluks, the Pahlavanian, whom he deployed for various administrative and military purposes. These mamluks, no longer ordinary Turkoman slaves (*ghulams*) but emirs, were raised to positions of considerable power.²⁹

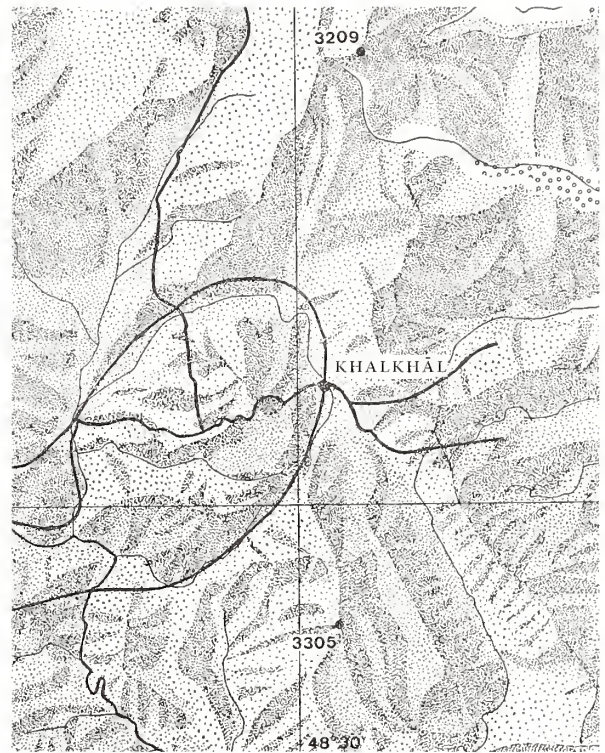
The historian Rāvandī noted that Jahān Pahlavān appointed some sixty of the mamluks as governors of towns and provinces. Rāvandī also listed twenty of their



12

12

Map eastern Azerbaijan, Dailam and Gilan, with the region of Khalkhāl indicated. After Stephan Kroll



13

13

Map of the Khalkhāl region. After Stephan Kroll

names,³⁰ which are similar in titulature and composition to those on the Freer plate, with an Arabic title and a Turkish and/or Persian name. The course of these lives is difficult to trace, and only painstaking detective work results in the detailed history of a single individual.³¹ From gleanings of biographical details, it is evident that the Pahlavanian and similar mamluk cohorts were active in central Iran and Azerbaijan through the second half of the twelfth century and into the first part of the thirteenth. Always ready to serve the strongest master, they shifted allegiance as their situations required. They formed the active military, administrative, and political class of the time and wielded considerable power. Their role and impact as patrons and tastemakers can only be surmised, although as former mamluks of the Eldegüzids, their culture, taste, and behavior would have been shaped by their training and formation at the atabegs' courts.³²

The second power group in the borderlands between Daylam/Gilan and Azerbaijan were the Isma'ilis.³³ During this period, Daylam was being absorbed into the territorial holdings of Rudbar and Alamut, the western Iranian Isma'ili strongholds.³⁴ With the accession of Hasan III³⁵ to the Isma'ili imamate in 1210, there occurred a further expansion to the west. Hasan's policy of an overt shift to Sunni practices and allegiance to the Abbasid caliph led to a useful local alliance with his neighbor, an Eldegüzid of the third generation, Muzaffar al-Dīn Özbeg (died AH 622/1225 CE). As partial payment for his help in the campaigns against the Khwarazmians, Hasan received the territories of Zanjan and Abhar from Özbeg.³⁶ Thus, there is indirect evidence that by the second decade of the thirteenth century, Isma'ili territorial expansion had reached the Tarom Mountains and could have included Khalkhāl as a tribute-paying territory.³⁷ What is certain is that the alliance with the Eldegüzids was enough cause for the renewal of hostilities between the Isma'ilis and the Khwarazmians.

These long-standing hostilities went back to 1194, when Tekesh Khwarazmshah displaced the Eldegüzids from a large part of eastern Azerbaijan, and took the side of the inhabitants of the city of Qazvin against the Ismaʿilis. Except for a brief interlude of quiescence in 1210, animosities simmered for several years until Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnu Khwarazmshah instituted a more aggressive policy in the 1220s. The major and final encounter occurred in 1226–27 when Jalāl al-Dīn attacked Ismaʿili strongholds in eastern Azerbaijan.³⁸ Al-Nasawī (died 1241), the sultan's biographer, does not list these strongholds, but Khalkhāl could have been among them. The biographer also is silent about the details of the campaign, although he states that after 1226, Jalāl al-Dīn appointed Husam al-Dīn Tekin Tash ruler (*malik*) of Khalkhāl and its dependencies.³⁹ The latter remained at Khalkhāl until he was killed during the Mongol invasion in AH 628–29/1230–31 CE.⁴⁰ Apparently then, the region of Khalkhāl was in the Khwarazmshah's hands for only a short while. Sometime in the intervening months, one of Özbeg's mamluks, ʿIzz al-Dīn Balban (or Balaban) al-Khalkhāli, took control of the region and its fortresses, particularly of Khalkhāl, Firuzabad, and Balak, using them as a base of operations to plunder and attack areas in Azerbaijan and Iraq-i ʿAjam. He was so notorious in his robberies and exactions that Jalāl al-Dīn was forced to respond with a siege of Firuzabad. After only a few days, Balban came out of the fortress, holding his sword and shield, and asking for mercy.⁴¹ This incident seems a more typical negotiation of surrender between one holder of a fortress and another, and not an occasion for a dramatic siege and a disastrous outcome. Al-Nasawī did not report on major battles and sieges in Khalkhāl.

Individuals or cohorts of emirs were active participants in all the actions pursued by the atabegs and the Khwarazmshahs. Apparently they followed the pattern of changing allegiances documented above, moving easily into and out of the Khwarazmshahs' camp after their formative years in Eldegüzid service. It is likely that members of this group are depicted on the plate, and that the ones who are named belonged to the same class of emirs and would have behaved in similar fashion. The appellation (*kunya*) of Beg Arslan Ūshi indicates his origin in the Ferghana Valley. A Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad does appear in al-Nasawī's biography of Jalāl al-Dīn.⁴² The name Mengli (similar to Menglibeh on the plate) appears twice in other versions in the historical record but in neither case is the identification certain.⁴³ In the end, the final identification of the named emirs remains elusive.

The victorious leader on the plate, Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla waʾl-Dīn, might be more specifically identified, however. Two alternative identifications can be proposed: one a Salghurid of Fars, the other an Eldigüzid of Azerbaijan. The first possibility is that he was Jalāl al-Dīn's brother-in-law—the Salghurid Muẓaffar al-Dīn Abū Bakr, atabeg of Fars after 1227. The history of relations between the atabegs

of Fars and the Khwarazmians is a rather tangled one. Although there had been animosity in the previous generations, by 1224 Jalal al-Dīn had married Mu'mina (Malika) Khatun, the daughter of Sa'd, the reigning Salghurid atabeg. Sa'd's son and successor, Abū Bakr, joined the sultan's forces shortly afterward and remained with him on campaigns throughout northwestern Iran until the end of 1226.⁴⁴

There is little evidence that there were any hostilities between the Eldegüzids and the Isma'ilis in the thirteenth century, especially after 1210, the year of the accession of Hasan III. However, all indications point to a continuing and indeed escalating animosity between the Isma'ilis and the Khwarazmians, dating from the latter's first appearance in western Iran in 1194. The area of the Tarom Mountains, Semiran (and probably Khalkhāl), could have become Isma'ili territory by 1210, if not earlier.⁴⁵ It is thus likely that a conflict at Khalkhāl after that date and before 1227 would have involved a confrontation between the Khwarazmians and the Isma'ilis.

Based on this admittedly sketchy historical chronology, the siege of Isma'ili Khalkhāl by the Khwarazmshah's troops could have happened any time between 1210 and 1227, though probably more aggressive action should be associated with Jalāl al-Dīn. And if Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn can be identified as Abū Bakr, then the years 1224–27 are the only possible period for the battle itself. If, however, the conflict at Khalkhāl is placed prior to this period, that is between 1185 and 1210—the years traditionally associated with the dating of *haft rang/mina'i* pieces—then the identity of the battling forces is not as certain, since even less is known about Khalkhāl of these years.

The second possibility is that Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn was an Eldegüzid. While it is true that two Eldegüzid scions bear the title of Muẓaffar al-Dīn, we can discount Muẓaffar al-Dīn Özbek for two reasons: First, he did not accede to the atabegate until AH 606/1210 CE. Second, Özbek granted his friend and ally, the Isma'ili Hassan III, territories in the northeastern areas of his realm, including, possibly, Khalkhāl. Therefore, it is unlikely that a battle between these two parties and depicting this Muẓaffar al-Dīn's victory over the fortress would have occurred after 1210.

The earlier Muẓaffar al-Dīn of the dynasty was Qizil Arslān, the brother of Jahān Pahlavān, who had a seat at Tabriz. He reigned as the head of the dynasty only from his brother's death until AH 586/1191 CE, but nonetheless was active as a power broker and cultural patron. He spent his short reign as atabeg attempting to assert himself over the next generation and the Pahlavanian mamluks and to manage the succession of the Seljuk sultanate. Sources say nothing about his contesting the Isma'ili westward expansion or in fact about any engagements on the northeastern frontiers of his domains. Thus, from a purely political point of view, there seems to

be no compelling evidence to assume that the battle for Khalkhāl depicted on the Freer Siege Scene Plate was an Eldegüzid–Isma‘ili encounter.

From the point of view of cultural history, however, the Eldegüzids were particularly well known as patrons of literature and architecture. Of these, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Qizil Arslān is best remembered for his support of poets and scholars even before he became an atabeg. Panegyric references to him in terms of epic heroes abound in the poems created under his patronage. Both Khaqānī and Nizāmī compared him to Farīdūn and Bahram Gūr.⁴⁶ Thus, it is tempting to see that same type of metaphoric mode operating in the plate’s pictorial program, where the actual event is complemented by the depiction of heroes on the back, one of whom holds the bovine-headed mace, the mark of Farīdūn, and another slays a dragon, one of Bahram Gūr’s many feats. For those reasons alone, Qizil Arslān would be an attractive candidate as the Muẓaffar al-Dīn of the plate and as its audience or patron.

The Agency of the Artisan-Artist: The Place of Kashan

The compelling specificity of the main scene seems to require a fuller and perhaps even a different explanation. The scarcity of sources on the regional and local history of western Iran makes further dependence on written sources less promising. It now becomes a matter of visual decoding. The details of the battle’s progress indicate that a specific siege was portrayed, no matter that retreating to a castle, holding out there, and then suing for peace is an oft-repeated chain of events in the chronicles of the period. Here, there is a full array of drama. First is the falling or leaping figure of the defeated leader; second is the ruse of armor in the walls; third is the inclusion of the catapult and its keepers; fourth is the sortie out of the castle; fifth are the half-naked and naked bodies strewn on the battlefield. Given the commission for portraying such a specific battle and campaign, how would an artisan-artist have been able to assemble the image? And on what particular models could he have relied upon to create it?

This discussion began by stating that this object is unique in its visual program, its size, and in its specific use of epigraphy. It is also alone among the extant images of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in portraying a (presumably) contemporary event. While what others have termed an explosion of the visual culture may have occurred during this period, no other siege scenes are known to have survived.⁴⁷ This expanded visual culture was created in several well-known categories, including: illustrations of scientific manuscripts⁴⁸ and of *belles-lettres* in Arabic or in Persian, as evidenced by the Persian romance *Varqah ve Gulshah* and the popular Arabic text of the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri⁴⁹; the depiction of heroes from the Iranian national epic and related epics, found mostly on ceramics and metalwork⁵⁰; images

of planets and other astrological symbols as well as of the pleasures and pastimes of the court, which may have been a metaphor for paradisiacal themes⁵¹; and finally images with overt Shi'i iconography.⁵² No mode of depiction or style was exclusive to one iconographic category alone. The mass of visual motifs and components migrated from one category to another, in a "meta-pictorial" space, and were used to enrich and elaborate the resulting image. The process was fluid and by no means set. The expansion of images encouraged innovation and the creation of new visual ensembles. These all took time to gain visual currency and, therefore, are not easily legible without their texts. It was in this climate of innovation, formation, and visual ambiguity that the plate was created.

The main scene on the plate seems precocious. Only a century later, battle and siege scenes would appear regularly throughout the illustrated histories of Rashid al-Dīn, and almost contemporaneously in the epic history of the *Shahnama*, particularly in the so-called small *Shahnama* manuscripts. In many ways, the siege scene prefigured these scenes, and introduced a genre developed by the later schools of Persian and Mughal painting in such historical manuscripts as the *Zafarnama* or the *Baburnama*.⁵³

The assumptions about the identity of the scene and of the *dramatis personae* are valid in their generalities, if disputable in their particulars. What can be identified are the time (the first quarter of the thirteenth century) and the place of the depicted action (Khalkhāl). The individuals named are clearly members of the Turkish military emir class. What remains now is to propose the manner in which this class would desire and use this object. Closely tied to its purpose is the problem of patronage: who did the actual ordering and who contributed to the scene's creation? The final set of questions pertains to the status and dating of the *haft rang/mina'i* technique, particularly when compared to the related technique of luster painting.

Because this plate commemorates victory in battle, it is natural to assume that it was made for the victorious leader, Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn. That would mean that he or someone in his court circle ordered the commemoration of the victory and instructed the makers in the details of the image. In the Islamic world prior to the thirteenth century, specific battles, though often mentioned in annals, were infrequently commemorated with monuments (or images) of lasting memory.⁵⁴ The closest contemporaneous examples that come to mind are both Western and Byzantine. A long, narrow band forms the depiction of the Norman victory on the Bayeux Tapestry, creating a continuous narrative with labels and smaller scenes running above and below. In Byzantine practice, murals of battle scenes bore labels or poetic descriptions but have not survived.⁵⁵ Significantly, it too uses inscriptions to identify the main *dramatis personae* and the major incidents of the story.

Another possibility is that the piece was made by an artisan-artist to commemorate the event and sell to its participants. If this were so, then the amount of guidance and interference the maker received from the intended audience would have been less direct, and other concerns specific to the ethos of the workshop could have been included in the program. The appearance of the names for identification would strengthen the argument that the piece was made on speculation. Much like works of prose or poetry presented by their writers at atabeg courts, a well-known practice in this period, the plate's maker(s) would have constructed its program for presentation in the hopes of remuneration or pension. The use of writing to ensure the correct identification of the victors, therefore, was necessary, while the entire available visual vocabulary and culture was activated for the other people depicted on the plate.

The attribution to a Kashan workshop has been accepted, if only because of its capacity to throw plates of such size using artificial paste.⁵⁶ It is even more feasible if the victory in question were over the Isma'ilis. The history of Kashan in the twelfth through the fourteenth century reveals a very zealous Shi'i Imami populace, and one that was not averse to including a rich Shi'i repertoire in its manufacture of decorated and pictorial luster tiles and bowls.⁵⁷ Given the opportunity to depict a victory over the Isma'ilis, the Shi'i artisan-artist could have developed his own iconography, showing the vanquished heretics with special inflection. This may be a possible explanation for the significant appearance of denuded bodies, already commented upon by Ettinghausen.⁵⁸

The Shi'i Imami stronghold of Kashan held great animosity toward the Isma'ilis, who in their eyes were worse heretics than the Sunnis and had been the target of Shi'i invective during the entire preceding century.⁵⁹ Such a climate of opinion would have supported the depiction of the vanquished in such detail. Short of written identification, every visual device in the artisan-artist's vocabulary was marshaled to make the vanquished as visually clear as possible. The defeated leader is shown in the same scale and detail as the victor. As much, if not more, space is given to the defeated as to the victors.⁶⁰ Other members of the defeated army, particularly the sortie group, have also been singled out, much like the named victors and unlike the more miniaturized ranks of attacking infantry and cavalry.

A certain attitude toward the depiction of the enemy is apparent, similar to the most literal and best-developed depiction of the enemy in the Shi'i context, the Umayyad Yazid in the *ta'ziya* plays.⁶¹ That a specifically *ta'ziya* iconography may have existed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is suggested by the decoration of the luster-painted plate from Ghazni as well as by smaller *haft rang/mina'i* plates.⁶² Thus, the well-developed visual code for enemies may fit very well into a Kashan

pictorial tradition, both because of the manner in which the defeated leader is depicted and because of a specific Kashani designation of Ismaʿilis as heretics. This Kashan context is only significant, however, if one assumes that the creation of the image was original to the plate.

Matters would be different if the plate were not the commemoration of an event, but rather a copy of a preexisting image. In other words, the original and compelling creation of an image made for Muẓaffar al-Dawla waʾl-Dīn could have occurred in another medium, likely a wall or book painting. Such an assumption is supported by the rather unusual composition of the plate's central field, which could have been devised for a flat surface, monumental or otherwise. The conflation of the narrative, in particular, may have resulted from the transfer from a monumental format (with a sequential narrative) to a miniature format (with a collapsed narrative). The key aspect, however, is that the existence of an image without a text is more likely in a unique composition—for example, a wall painting in a specific palace or one on paper with an accompanying text—than in a medium such as ceramics where most iconographically recognizable images are closely connected to an already circulating story.⁶³ The copies of the image would have been appropriate as trophies, but the invention of the image itself would have taken place in a medium other than decorated ceramics. In addition, the underdrawing discovered in the microscopic examination of the surface is suggestive of a prepared set of drawings.

The mindful juxtaposition of that specific, historical image on the front of plate with the generalized metaphor of the heroes and heroic feats on its reverse still would have been the decision of the ceramic decorator, considering the extensive epic-like imagery within the *haft rang/minaʿi* (and lusterware) repertory produced in or attributed to Kashan workshops. The hypothesis of a preexisting image would relegate an atelier of Kashan to the more minor role of copying, rather than one of generating a totally new composition and iconography. The agency of the artisan-artist in the creation of the image then would be considerably diminished. Also, the Shiʿi leanings of Kashan would not be directly reflected, and much of that visual complexity would be inaccessible.

Further arguments for a Kashan-invented image are nested within the practice of ceramic decoration. Despite the exigencies of composition for the historic image with its insistently centrifugal action centering on the two opposing figures, victor and vanquished, the format of main field and decorated rim common on large plates perseveres. The subject matter between rim and field is continuous. Yet, the combination of vignettes on the rim—groups of horsemen alternating with battling pairs—maintains the insistent rhythm of the type of epigraphic border used on every one of the series of large plates to which the Freer object belongs.⁶⁴ The ceramic workshop habits of rim decoration are further demonstrated by the

explanatory, identifying inscription, which was written upside-down in relationship to the image (fig. 8). Were such a text part of a preexisting image, then surely it would have appeared as a label within the image itself or in the same orientation as the image, and not as a circular rim decoration where inscriptions can face either way.⁶⁵ Finally, the converging radial composition of the victorious army and the empty field at the center supports the idea that the first assembly of the siege image happened at Kashan during the production of a ceramic plate.⁶⁶

The intensive study of the plate raises other implications about the dating and status of *haft rang/mina'i*. First, why make a commemorative plate in this technique? Second, what does the existence of the plate with a possible date of 1210–27 mean to the accepted chronology of *haft rang/mina'i* production? If one accepts the supposition that the Freer plate copied a preexisting image, either on paper or on a wall, then it follows that the enamel technique, particularly with the full color range seen on this plate, is more suitable than luster painting for the demands of the careful depiction of a specific battle.

Extant *haft rang/mina'i* vessels dated by inscription, such as those signed by Abu Zayd, were made in the late 1180s and display excellent draftsman's skills. So, it is tempting to place the Freer plate within Abu Zayd's circle and the time he worked as a painter and decorator using this technique. Yet, the very manner of decorative technique differs between his group and the plate. In the former case, the enameling colors were all applied on top of the already baked white opaque base glaze and affixed on top of this surface in the second smoky (reduction) kiln firing. The resulting colors emerged matte and grayish in tone.

In the case of the siege plate, the blue, turquoise, if not magenta, and pink-flesh colors were applied in glaze prior to the first firing, and only the red and black were added during the second firing. The resulting colors are shinier and brighter, that is, more enamel-like. The process of applying the finishing black lines might have been prolonged and laborious because several details of the victors' weapons remain unfinished. For example, lances are missing from the hands of Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīr Berīg, Shams al-Dīn Ilyas, and Amīr Sābiq al-Dīn, and bow strings and arrows have not been drawn in for Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn, Beg Arslan Ūshi, or the sortie party. The differences in color and sequence may reflect varied work habits and perhaps even different workshop groups. Could they also be chronologically separated, with the "grayer" group sorted around the workshop of Abu Zayd of the 1180–90s and the "bluer" one around a later one, of the 1200–20s?

Looking at the plate, one ponders the possible uses of such a trophy, given the mobile lives led by the depicted and named *dramatis personae*. In which treasury of equipment, armaments, matched sets of dishes and metalwork, or instruments was it deposited? Was it ever displayed? And why should the Pahlavanian court inflec-

tion with its preoccupation with heroic metaphor be so completely carried out on both front and back? Was the back ever seen? Given the constantly shifting allegiances, frenetic movements, and countless attacks and sieges chronicled in contemporary histories, was there any real point in remembering this particular siege? Perhaps, it was only in hindsight, following his return to home base in peaceful Fars after 1227, that the Salghurid Abū Bakr, the Lord Muẓaffar al-Dawla wa'l-Dīn of the plate, got the chance to relive his victorious adventure.⁶⁷

As referred to by Ettinghausen and Grabar, the “flowering of Seljuk art,” therefore, can be seen not only as a rise of an urban and artisanal taste and visual culture, but as a multidimensional and longer-lasting dynamic that had the potential to reimagine the immediate past in epic strokes. Atabegs and mamluks as well as artisans and literati fashioned the memory of an event, relying on a visual code of event recounting and re-presentation.⁶⁸ They extended and expanded this code for future use in the great, illustrated epics and histories of the fourteenth century. If an Isma‘ili–Khwarazmian conflict was indeed depicted, then both the iconography and composition were informed by the Pahlavanian/Salghurid context of atabeg courts⁶⁹ and by the Kashan ethos and practice of production.⁷⁰

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NOTES

- 1 The initial discussion of this plate, F1943.3, was presented at the Freer Gallery of Art symposium, "Ceramics from the World of Islam," held in 1974. My initial findings have since been referred to by E. J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery of the Eighth to the Fifteenth century in the Keir Collection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 195; M. S. Rogers, "Review of Geza Fehervari, *Islamic Pottery: A Comprehensive Study Based on the Barlow Collection*, 1973, and E. Atil, *Ceramics from the World of Islam*, 1973," in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 33, nos. 1–2 (1976), pp. 91–93; D. Nicolle, *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era, 1050–1350* (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1988), p. 144; and M. S. Rogers, "Ceramics," in *Arts of Persia*, ed. R. W. Ferrier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 255. The plate's most complete presentation to date has been in E. Atil, *Ceramics from the World of Islam* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1973), cat. 50. It has been reproduced in all major manuals on Islamic art and civilization, and was most recently discussed in R. Ettinghausen, O. Grabar, and M. Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art And Architecture, 650–1250* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), and in E. Sims, with B. I. Marshak and E. J. Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian painting and its sources* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 92–93. The terms *haft rang* and *mina'i* have been used in this study to describe the same overglaze enamel technique of decoration. While both terms are Persian, *haft rang* (seven-color) is the more descriptive term; and the second is a modern collectors' term whose best explanation is in O. Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands. The Kuwait National Museum The Al-Sabah Collection*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004) pp. 364–65.
- 2 For a detailed discussion of the fabric and surface of the plate as well as the complex repairs, reassembly, and inlay carried out on it, see the study by Blythe McCarthy and Renata Holod, "Under a microscope: The examination of the Freer Siege Scene Plate," on the Freer|Sackler website, <http://asia.si.edu/research/articles/minai-battle-plate.asp>.
- 3 The reading of "Khurasan" in place of "Khalkhāl" proposed in E. Atil's article, "The Freer Bowl and the Legacy of the *Shahname*," in the *in memoriam* volume for Michael Meinecke, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 11 (1999), pp. 7–12, as read by Abdullah Ghouchani, was based on a photograph of the plate before it was cleaned. Ghouchani, therefore, could not see the full remaining original strokes of the letters. I thank him for discussing his reading with me. I am grateful to William Hanaway for discussing my reading and offering his opinion about the nature of the text.
- 4 On the rhetoric of historical texts, see M. R. Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980); E. Poliakova, "The Development of a Literary Canon in Medieval Persian Chronicles: The Triumph of Etiquette," *Iranian Studies* 17 (1984), pp. 237–56; D. S. Richards, "Ibn al-Athīr and the Later Parts of the *Kamil*: A Study of Aims and Methods," ed. D. O. Morgan, *Medieval History Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), pp. 76–108, and most notably, J. Meisami, "The Historian and the Poet: Rāvandī, Nizami and the Rhetoric of History," ed. K. Talatoff and J. Clinton, *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love and Rhetoric* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 98–128.
- 5 See, for example, *haft rang/mina'i* and luster vessels with dates and/or poetic

inscriptions in O. Watson, "Documentary Mina'i and Abu Zaid's Bowls," ed. R. Hillenbrand, *Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1994) pp. 170–80; O. Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), pp. 347–63; O. Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2007), pp. 108–49; and S. Blair, "A Brief Biography of Abu Zayd," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008), pp. 155–77. On the other hand, Sims in *Peerless Images*, p. 93, notes that the *haft rang/mina'i* and luster tile at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (31.495) has a simple declarative inscription: "Iranians leaving the fortress of Farūd" and no verse, even though the depicted event is an episode from the *Shahnama*.

6 Flowering branches, trees, and pools are the most frequently appearing elements of landscape on portable objects—both ceramic and metalwork vessels—and are utilized as much for motifs dividing scene from scene as for indicating a setting. For a discussion of this feature connected to the Mosul school, see H. al-Harithy, "The Ewer of Ibn Jaldak (623/1226) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Inquiry into the Origin of the Mawṣili School of Metalwork Revisited," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64, no. 3 (2001), pp. 355–68.

7 On locations of castles, W. Kleiss, "Fortifications" (1999) and "Castles" (1990) in *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, accessed September 10, 2011, www.iranicaonline.org/articles.

8 This geometric ornament also appears in the main field on a series of *haft rang/mina'i* vessels. Examples of bowls or sherds with interlocking figures include: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 12.49.1, 20.120.124; Musée Nationale de Céramique, Sèvres, 21822; Detroit

Institute of Art, 30-461. J. Soustiel, *La Céramique Islamique Guide de Connoisseur* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1985), p. 98. See also the website <http://asia.si.edu/research/articles/minai-battle-plate.asp> accompanying this study, where a sherd with a geometric ornament in the Freer[Sackler collection is discussed.

9 M. S. Simpson, "The Narrative Structure of a Medieval Iranian Beaker," *Ars Orientalis* 12 (1981), pp. 15–24; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Trois manuscrits de l'Iran Seljoukide," *Arts Asiatiques* 16 (1967), pp. 3–51; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Roman de Varqeh et Golšāh," *Arts Asiatiques* 22 (1970); for example, see figs. 34, 35.

10 On the development of brick and tile decoration, see D. Wilber, "The Development of Mosaic Faience in Islamic Architecture in Iran," *Ars Islamica* 6, no. 1 (1939), pp. 16–47; L. S. Bretanitskii, *Zodchestvo Azerbayjana i Ego Mesto v Arkhitekture Perednego Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), pp. 69–210; L. I. Rempel, *Arkhitekturnyi Ornament Uzbekistana* (Tashkent, 1961); R. Hillenbrand, "The Use of Glazed Tilework in Iranian Islamic Architecture," *Akten des VII Internationale Kongresses für Iranische Kunst und Archäologie. München 7–10 September 1976, Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 6 (Berlin, 1979), pp. 545–54; also V. Minorsky, "Nakhṣuwān," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (EI1), vol. 3, pp. 839–40.

11 On Sultaniyya, see S. Blair, "The Mongol Capital of Sultaniyya, 'The Imperial,'" *Iran* 24 (1986), pp. 139–51.

12 For example, a favorite motif in the *Kitab al-Diryaq* manuscripts and inlaid metalwork is a peasant with a mattock. On the plate's reverse, he has become an incidental inclusion with a tree in the expanded landscape.

13 For examples of such flying figures, see the *Kitab al-Aghāni* frontispieces, in particular those of volumes 17 and 19, Millet Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Feyzullah Efendi 1566, dated 1216–20. Also note the Seljuk reliefs of flying victories on the now-disappeared gate at Konya, cf. F. Sarre, *Konya Köşkü* (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1987).

14 Nicolle, *Arms and Armour*, p. 126.

15 Typical descriptions of Daylamis come from the tenth century, where they are noted as being particularly hairy. See Muḥammad Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab surat al-'ard* (Beirut: Dar Maktabat al-Hayah, 1964) p. 253. It is possible that such regional typing continued into the thirteenth century, and was conveyed here visually. Furthermore, it should also be noted that disheveled hair suggests a body out of control. Thus, distraught mourners rendered with disheveled hair appear in the painting *The Bier of Alexander* from the great Ilkhanid *Shahanama*, Freer Gallery of Art, F1938.3.

16 Grace Guest and Richard Ettinghausen noted the appearance of these denuded bodies in their article, "Iconography of a Luster Plate," *Ars Orientalis* 4 (1961), pp. 25–64, particularly pp. 43–45. The depiction of nude or seminude bodies, unless specifically meant to connote the exotic, fairy world, actually indicated the lower classes, such as laborers and peasants, or those with a loss of status, such as a prisoner. Despoliation of corpses can be taken as normal behavior on battlefields. Note similar details depicted in Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Roman de Varqeh et Golšāh," figs. 5, 8, and 9. On the conduct of war, see Fakhr-i Modabber, *Adab al-Harb*, ed. Soheylī Khonsari (Tehran, 1967).

- 17 J. W. Allan, "Armor," *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, accessed September 15, 2011, takes these lamellar and chainmail suits of armor as having fallen to the ground. I see them in birds' eye view, set up as part of a ruse; see n. 19.
- 18 The specialist technician shown next to the catapult/mangonel machine wears the robes and turban of a scholar rather than a warrior. This machine may be the *manjanik* mentioned in the sources. It was best used against an army rather than as a siege machine against walls, and became a feature of battles toward the end of the twelfth century. See C. Cahen, "Un Traité d'armerie composé pour Saladin," *Bulletin des Études Orientales* 12 (1947/48), pp. 16–18; A. M. Belenitskii, and B. I. Marshak, "Drevneishee Izobrazhenie Osadnoi Mashiny v Srednei Azii" [The oldest depiction of a siege machine in Central Asia], *Gosudarstvennyi Ermitazh, Kultura Vostoka* (Leningrad, 1978), pp. 215–21; V. J. Parry, and X. Yapp, eds., *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1975); and D. R. Hill, "Mandjaniq," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill, 2011), accessed November 29, 2011. A similar paring of machine and technician is reflected later in the depiction of the history of Maḥmūd of Ghazna as it appears in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jamī' al-Tawārīkh*, Edinburgh University Library, Arab 20, f. 54; see D. T. Rice, *The Illustrations to the "World History" of Rashīd al-Dīn* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976) p. 147.
- 19 Such a ruse is mentioned in Ibn al-Athīr's description of the siege of Shahdiz Castle commanded by Ibn 'Attāsh in the environs of Isfahan for the year AH 500/1107 CE; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, vol. 10 (AH 500), after B. Lewis, *The Assassins* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 54–55.
- 20 Right-handedness and left-handedness have been investigated in other cultures; for example, see R. Needham, ed., *Right and Left: Essay on Dual Symbolic Classification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). It could be that the direction of the Arabic script from right to left underlined the supremacy of right over left. I thank Christiane Gruber for this suggestion.
- 21 It is notoriously difficult to portray a historical event without recourse to an already existing allegorical and developed visual language, and without use of text. In this context, see the work of I. Winter, "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 (1981), pp. 1–38; R. Brilliant, "The Column of Trajan and Its Heirs: Helical Tales, Ambiguous Trails," *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (Ithaca, NY, 1984), pp. 90–123; J. Russell, "Sennacherib's Lachish Narratives," *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*, ed. P. J. Holliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 55–73; and H. Pittman, "The White Obelisk and the Problem of Historical Narrative in the Art of Assyria," *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 2 (June 1996), pp. 334–55. For the portrayal of the Norman invasion in the Bayeux tapestry, O. K. Werckmeister, "The Political Ideology of the Bayeux Tapestry," *Studi Medievali*, 3rd. ser., vol. 17, no. 2 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1976), pp. 535–95; R. Brilliant, "The Bayeux Tapestry: A stripped narrative for their eyes and ears," *Word and Image* 7, no. 2 (April–June 1991), pp. 98–116; and S. Lewis, *The Rhetoric Power in the Bayeux Tapestry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Regionally closer examples include the numerous wall paintings of Sogdiana excavated at Panjikent and Afrasiyab. While mainly connected to the depiction of known tales, some cycles have been identified as historical events, most with identifying inscriptions. An exception without an extant identifying tag may be the siege and storming of the city of Samarkand by Muslim armies in 714 CE as painted in the rebuilt palace of the Dewastich of Panjikent; see G. Azarpay et al., *Sogdian Painting: Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) pp. 64–66; and B. Marshak, *Legends, Tales and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2002), pp. 19–21.
- 22 As found, for example, on bowls in Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, p. 368, cat. P.3; Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory*, p. 110, cat. 69; also on a bowl in the Freer Gallery of Art, F1945.8.
- 23 On the use of imagery found in the written and oral traditions of the *Shahnama*, see M. S. Simpson, "Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects," *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Simpson and H. Kessler (Washington, DC: CASVA, Studies in the History of Art 16, 1985), pp. 131–49; S. M. Shukurov, "Shakh-name" *Firdousi i raunyaya illustratyvna traditsiya* [The "Shahnama" of Firdawsi and the early illustrative tradition] (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), pp. 53–108. For a summary of work on images of the *Shahnama*, see M. S. Simpson "Shahnama as Text and Shahnama as Image," in *Shahnama: The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 9–24. I thank Shreve Simpson for her careful reading of this article and for her helpful comments.

- 24 For a list of depictions of the heroes Faridūn and Bahram Gūr, see Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," pp. 143–44. Also see B. Schmitz, "A Fragmentary Mina'i bowl with Scene from the *Shahnama*," *Art of the Saljuqs*, pp. 156–61. An actual mace similar to the one depicted on the Freer plate is now in the collection of the Dar al-Athar, Kuwait. I thank the curator, Salam Koukji, for bringing this weapon to my attention.
- 25 F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg, 1895); J. H. Kramers, "Les noms Musalmans composés avec Dīn," *Acta Orientalia* 5 (1927), pp. 53–67; A. Dietrich, "Zu den mit ad-dīn zusammengesetzten islamischen Personennamen," *Zeitschrift Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 110 (1960), pp. 43–54; *The History of the Seljuk Turks from the Jami' al-Tawārikh*, trans. K. A. Luther, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Richmond: Routledge, 2010).
- 26 For a detailed archaeological survey with excellent detailed maps, see Stephan Kroll "Archaeologische Fundplätze in Iranisch-Ost-Azərbaydjan," *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 17 (1984), pp. 13–134.
- 27 Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, ed. F. Wustenfild (Leipzig, 1866–73) after P. Schwarz, *Iran im Mittelalter* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969) p. 1173; Hamdullah Mustawfi Qazwini, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulūb composed by Hamid-Allah Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740 (1340)*, ed. and trans. G. Le Strange (London, 1915–19), pp. 85 and 93.
- 28 On the Eldegüzids/İldegozids, see K. A. Luther, "Atābakān-e Aḍarbāyjān" and "Atābakān-e Marāğa" *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, accessed September 16, 2011, www.iranicaonline.org/articles. Also Z. M. Buniatov, *Gosudarstvo Atabekov Azerbayjana (1136–1225)* [The Realm of the Atabegs of Azerbaijan (1126–1225)] (Baku, Azerbaijan: Elm, 1978). The vocalization of the dynasty's name is a problem. Buniatov gives İldeñizids, Bosworth follows with İldeñizid; Luther with Eldegüzids, and Richards with İldikiz. I follow Luther.
- 29 K. A. Luther, "Rāvandī's report on the administrative changes of Muḥammad Jahan Pahlavan," *Iran and Islam*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 393–406; A. Zaryab, "Saugand-nama-i Jahān Pahlavān," *Ayande* 9, nos. 8–9 (AH 1362/1983 CE), pp. 613–17; I. Afshar, "Ahdname'e az Atabeg Muḥammad İldeguzi," *Tārīkh* (AH 2536/1976–77 CE), pp. 82–90; A. Lambton, *Change and Continuity in Medieval Persia* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), pp. 221–47; for a general overview, see K. A. Luther, "Atābakān-e Aḍarbāyjān" and "Atābakān-e Marāğa."
- 30 Muḥammad b. 'Alī Rāvandī, *Raḥat al-sudūr wa ayat al-surūr dar ta'rikh-i al-i Saljuq*, ed. M. M. Iqbāl (London: GMS, 1912), pp. 233–403. Thus, for example, in AH 540/1146 CE, Khalkhāl had been (for a time) an *iqta'* of 'Abd al-Raḥman Yürek, apparently as a *mamluk* of the father, Atabek Shams al-Dīn Eldegüz (pp. 237–38).
- 31 Melikian-Chirvani traces the career of one such emir, Badr ad-Dīn Qaragöz. He first appears in the group of Jahān Pahlavān's emirs in 1188, and then as governor of Isfahan. In 1194, when Khwarazmshah Tekesh took Hamadan from the Eldegüzids, he confirmed Qaragöz as governor of Hamadan, as great chamberlain (*hājib-i kabīr*) and his *nāyib*; see "Essais sur la sociologie de l'art Islamique I. Argenterie et féodalité dans l'Iran medieval," *Art et Société dans le Monde Iranien*, ed. C. Adle (Paris: Institut Français d'Iranologie, 1982), pp. 143–75.
- 32 Rāvandī and Jarfadhāqānī tend to have a very low opinion of these emirs, calling them rapacious and constantly fighting. See Luther, "Ravandi's report," and Meisami, "The Historian and the Poet."
- 33 F. Daftari, *The Isma'ili: Their History and Doctrines*, (Cambridge, 1990); F. Daftari, *Isma'ilis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of the Assassins* (The Hague, 1955), and better in the *Cambridge History of Iran [CHI]*, vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods, ed. J. A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) pp. 422–82.
- 34 Daftari, *The Isma'ili*, pp. 35–59; D. S. Richards, trans., *The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from Al-Kāmil fi'l ta'rikh*, part 3: The Years 589–629/1193–1231 (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), esp. the years AH 614/1217–18 CE and AH 623/1226–27 CE.
- 35 At the time of his accession, Hasan III accepted the shari'a and initially read the *khutba* in the name of the Khwarazmshah. Shortly afterward, however, he switched to the opposing camp, and had the *khutba* read in the name of Caliph al-Nāsir (reigned 1180–25).
- 36 K. A. Luther, "Atābakān-e Aḍarbāyjān" and "Atābakān-e Marāğa."
- 37 V. Minorisky and C. E. Bosworth, "Tārum," *EI*2.
- 38 Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Nasawī, *Sirat al-Sultān Jalāl-Dīn Mankburni*, ed. and trans. from Arabic by Z. M. Buniatov (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 1996); Arabic text, p. 209, Russian translation, p. 208. See Richards, *Ibn al-Athīr*, p. 283, for the years AH 624/1226–27 CE.
- 39 Al-Nasawī, Arabic text, p. 25; Russian translation, p. 59 and n. 11.
- 40 See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, vol. 11, p. 383, who has a very low opinion of Jalāl

- al-Din, saying that he was only interested in other holders' lands.
- 41 Al-Nasawī, Arabic text, chap. 74, p. 193; Russian translation, pp. 208–10, nn. 1–11. Particularly informative on the Balban episode is a letter included in the manuscript of Muḥammad al-Hamawī, ff. 174v–176v, published in the notes by Buniatov. The letter was sent by the vizier Sharaf al-Mulk and Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn on 12 Shawwāl 625 (September 14, 1228) to the ruler of Surmara, Husam al-Dīn Khidhr who in turn sent it to the *hajib* 'Alī: "... We therefore prepared a detachment of our servants against him in the middle of the month of Ramadan (1228). Therefore, Balban withdrew into the fortress of Firuzabad, and we remained within the borders of Khalkhāl until the end of Ramadan for the pasturage of our horses. Afterward, with the end of the fast we moved to the fortress of Firuzabad, where our mamluks and our armies attacked the fortress. We surrounded it so tightly that even birds could not fly into it nor wind blow in its direction. We ordered catapults to be erected, and each cohort of our warriors to collect as many cattle hides as possible. These were delivered within two to three days as well as arms and supplies, and in innumerable quantities. When the inhabitants of the fortress saw the supplies and the preparations, Balban understood that he could only ... submit.... Three days later he entered into our Mamluk corps, and we ordered a *vali* [governor] appointed to each of his fortresses."
- 42 However, his full name is given as Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Bashīr Yārbek in the newest and most scholarly critical edition of al-Nasawī by Buniatov, rather than Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Shīr Barīk, as proposed by Melikian-Chirvani. Al-Nasawī, Arabic text, p. 253; Russian translation, pp. 268–69. I follow Buniatov's reading. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Iranian Sun Shield," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 6 (1992), p. 17, n. 68, gives the name as Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad-i Shīr Barīk, following Minovi's Persian translation of al-Nasawī (M. Minovi, Tehran, AH 1344/1965 CE, p. 252). In any case, should the latter reading be accepted, then it may be a further indication that the activities illustrated on the plate took place in the 1220s.
- 43 The name Mengli appears in the version of Mengli Beg (or Mengli Tegin) for an atabeg of the Sanjar-Shah, the pretender to Khwarazm throne and a rival of Tekish. This Mengli Beg was executed in 1187 (see Atā' Malik Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror*, trans. and ed. J. A. Boyle [Cambridge, MA, 1958], pp. 294–97). Another Mengli was a ruler (*mutamallik*) of Iraq; Nasir al-Dīn Mengli was apparently a former member of the Pahlavani who rebelled and was defeated by the Isma'ili Hasan III and the atabeg Muẓaffar al-Dīn Özbeg in 1214–15, see Juvaini, pp. 340, 701–2. Thus, neither name is exactly what we see on the plate: Menglibeh.
- 44 Abū Bakr's previous title was Nusrat al-Dīn, but he took on the title Muẓaffar al-Dīn, the title apparently used by all the Salghurid atabegs of Fars; see E. von Zambaur, *Manuel de Généalogie et de Chronologie pour l'Histoire de l'Islam* (Hanover, 1927). He was also given the title Qutlugh-khan by the Great Mongol Khan, Ögedei. When Sa'd died in late 1226, Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Abū Bakr succeeded to the throne of Shiraz and was the best of the Salghurid rulers; see Juvaini, *History of the World Conqueror*, p. 419, n. 27. Abū Bakr sent an embassy of submission to the Mongols immediately after taking over, thereby assuring Shiraz's role as a classic refuge for Persian culture in the tumultuous years of the mid-thirteenth century. See E. Merçil, *Fars Atabegleri: Salgurlular* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları: XIX, Dizi, Sa. 6, 1975) on the nature of Salghurid rule. Note that a marginal notation in Juvaini's manuscript (p. 459, n. 83) says that Mu'mina fled to Rum when the Kurds attacked her husband, and Abū Bakr then sent men to take his sister from Rum to Shiraz. This shows that Abū Bakr was familiar with and had access to northwest Iran. He ruled until 1270.
- 45 M. Kevran, "Une Fortresse D'Azerbayjan: Samiran," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 41, no. 1 (1973), pp. 71–93, on the takeover of Musafirid Semiran by the Isma'ilis.
- 46 J. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); K. A. Luther, "Atābakān-e Aḍarbāyjan," which includes a full list of poets patronized by the dynasty. See also Buniatov, *Gosudarstvo*, pp. 225–36, providing a list of the main cultural leaders active in the realm, first among them, the poets Khaqānī and Nizāmī. Julie Meisami in her article, "Palaces and Paradises: Palace Descriptions in Medieval Persian Poetry," *Islamic Art and Literature*, O. Grabar and C. Robinson, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2001), pp. 21–54, discusses *quṣūriyyāt* poems with panegyric descriptions of palace grounds, domes with astrological symbolism, and some references to painted walls with images of warriors.
- 47 O. Grabar, "The Visual Arts," *CHI*, vol. 5, pp. 626–58; R. Ettinghausen, "The Flowering of Seljuq Art," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970), pp. 113–31; Simpson, "Narrative"; R. Hillenbrand, "The Relationship between Book Painting and Luxury Ceramics," *Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, pp. 134–45.

- 48 O. Pancaroğlu, "The Emergence of Turkic Dynastic Presence in the Islamic World: Cultural Experiences and Artistic Horizons, 950–1250" and cat. no. 41 in *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600*, ed. David Roxburgh (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005). P. Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
- 49 Melikian-Chirvani, "Trois manuscripts" and "Le Roman de Varqeh et Golšāh"; Simpson, "Narrative" and "Shahnama as Text." On the *Maqamat*: O. Grabar, *The Illustrations of the Maqamat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Shirley Guthrie, *Arab Social Life in the Middle Ages: An Illustrated Study* (London: Saqi Books, 1995); R. Hillenbrand, "The Schefer Hariri," *Arab Painting Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, ed. A. Contadini (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 117–34; and David J. Roxburgh, "In Pursuit of Shadows: al-Hariri's Maqamat," *Muqarnas* 29 (2012, forthcoming). I thank David Roxburgh for this citation and for his comments on this study.
- 50 Simpson, "Shahnama as Text."
- 51 Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos*, pp. 8–9 and passim.
- 52 F. Bagherzadeh, "Iconographie Iranienne: Deux illustrations de Xe'at de l'année 583H/1187 apr. J. C.," *Archeologia Iranica et Orientalis: Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Vanden Berge*, ed. L. de Meyer and E. Haernick (Ghent: Peeters Press, 1989), pp. 1007–28. See also Bagherzadeh's forthcoming discussion on a newly decoded scene in the cycle of Shi'i iconography, in "The Secret of a XII–XIII Century Iranian Ceramic Bowl (presentation of the Head of Hussein to Yazid in Damascus)," *Proceedings of the 7th European Conference of Iranian Studies*, ed. K. Wasala and R. Rusek-Kowalska (Societas Iranologica Europaea, Cracow, September 7–10, 2011); see p. 47 for abstract; proceedings forthcoming. I thank Firouz Bagherzadeh for this reference.
- 53 On Rashid al-Dīn image cycles, see D. T. Rice, *The Illustrations*, and S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Dīn's Illustrated History of the World* (London: The Nour Foundation, 1995). On the small *Shahnama* manuscripts, see M. S. Simpson, *The Earliest Shahnama Manuscripts* (New York and London, 1979). A recent review of *Shahnama* illustrative cycles by M. S. Simpson, "Šāh-nāma iv. Illustrations," *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, www.iranicaonline.org/articles, accessed November 15, 2011, gives a full survey of published studies. The Shahnama Project at Cambridge University (<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/page/>) provides the fullest coverage of examples of battle and siege scenes in the illustrative cycles of the epic. On the *Zafarnama*, see E. Sims, "The Garrett Manuscript of the Zafar-name" (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1973), and "Ibrahim Sultan's Illustrated Zafar-nameh of 839/1436," *Islamic Art* 1 (1990–91), pp. 175–217. I thank Eleanor Sims for discussing siege scenes in the *Zafarnama* with me and for her critical reading of the earlier version of this study.
- 54 T. Leisten, "Mashhad Al-Nasr: Monuments of War and Victory in Medieval Islamic Art," *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), pp. 7–26, has studied the construction of monuments commemorating victory, and asserts that their longer-term social memory is practically nonexistent. This opinion is contested by J. Gierlichs in "A Victory Monument in the Name of Sultan Malik-Shāh in Diyarbakir: Medieval Figural Reliefs Used for Political Propaganda?" *Islamic Art* 6, pp. 51–70, and esp. pp. 55–57. Gierlichs argues that the complex program of figural reliefs in Diyarbakir as well as in other venues from 1179 through 1233 indicates these are victory monuments and visual instruments of political propaganda.
- 55 On the program of the Bayeux tapestry, see Werckmeister, "The Political Ideology of the Bayeux Tapestry," pp. 535–95. On the description of twelfth century depictions of Byzantine emperors in battle, see P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the 12th Century," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), pp. 123–183. I thank Warren T. Woodfin for his careful reading and for this citation. Melikian-Chirvani, "Sun Shield," n. 67, proposes that several image programs found specifically on *haft rang/mina'i* bowls, particularly those with horizontal bands of figures, were, in fact, taken from narrative cycles on other media, mainly on paper. See also, Simpson, "Narrative."
- 56 Melikian-Chirvani, "Sun Shield," n. 66, suggests that such a program for the plate could have been painted at Rayy. Based on the materials recovered during the excavations of E. Schmidt, now in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Penn Museum), one can say that, while several sherds and one bowl with rather poorly drawn decoration of *mina'i* were found, these cannot stand in for an entire school of painting or for large plate production. Of course, the excavation finds may not necessarily represent the ceramic production of entire site. Nonetheless, on the connection between painting on ceramic and other media, see C. Adle, "Un Diptique de Fondation en Céramique Lustrée, Kašān 711/1312," *Art et société dans le monde iranien*, ed. C. Adle (Paris: Institut Français d'Iranologie, 1982), pp. 199–218.

- 57 On the persistence of Shi'i sympathies in Kashan, see Adle, "Un Diptique de Fondation"; also J. Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and the Indian Sub-Continent* (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), esp. chap. 3. For interpretations of depictions on *haft rang/mina'i* bowls in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the British Museum as *ta'ziya* events, see Bagherzadeh, "Iconographie Iranienne"; for the connections between these pieces and Abu Zayd's signed work (dated late twelfth century), see Watson, "Documentary Mina'i." Blair, "A Brief Biography," provides a preliminary list of Abu Zayd's work, and discusses the family traditions of ceramic production and decoration. She remarks on these three or four and more generations, characterizing their scholarly character and literary engagement as well as their Shi'i leanings.
- 58 Guest and Ettinghausen, "On the Iconography of a Luster Plate."
- 59 J. Calmard, "Le Chiisme Imamite en Iran à l'époque seldjoukide d'après le Kitab al-Naqd," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 1 (1971) pp. 43–67; also "Kashan," *EI2*. I am grateful to him for discussing his work on Shi'i propaganda and commemoration in the Seljuk period.
- 60 Well-known battle scenes, however, show similar approaches in depiction; the importance of the victory is dramatized by the difficulty of the campaign. See n. 20.
- 61 On the visual representation of the *ta'ziya*, see Bagherzadeh, "Iconographie Iranienne" and his forthcoming essay in the *Proceedings of the 7th European Conference of Iranian Studies*. See also Blair, "A Brief Biography," p. 168. For subsequent development, J. Calmard, "Mécénat des représentations de *ta'ziye*," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam*, vol. 2 (1974), pp. 73–126; P. Chelkowski, ed., *Ta'ziyeh: ritual and drama in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1979); and B. Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
- 62 A luster-painted plate found at Ghazni (Kabul Museum, 63.2.1) now appears to be lost; it was reproduced in B. Rowland, *Ancient Arts in Afghanistan* (New York, 1966), pl. 101, and O. Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware* (Faber and Faber London, 1985), pp. 68–70, pl. 49.
- 63 Simpson, "Narrative" and "Shahnama as Text"; R. Ettinghausen, "Bahram Gur's Hunting Feats or the Problem of Identification," *Iran* 7 (1979), pp. 25–31.
- 64 For the list of large plates, see the website discussing the technical and conservation aspects of the plate: <http://asia.si.edu/research/articles/minai-battle-plate.asp>. The other epigraphic-band design tradition that may inform this composition is the floriated or more specifically animated epigraphic band best known in inlaid metalwork seen on Khurasani work, such as the "Bobrinsky" bucket at the Hermitage Museum; see R. Ettinghausen, "The 'Bobrinsky' Kettle: Patron and Style of an Islamic Bronze," *Gazette de Beaux Arts*, 6th ser., vol. 24 (October 1943), pp. 193–208. On vessels of the Mesopotamian school, D. S. Rice, "Studies in Islamic Metalwork: 1–V1," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (1952–58), in particular his discussion about the ewer of Ibn Mawaliya at the Louvre in part II (1953), pls. 20–32; D. S. Rice, *The Wade Cup in the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1988); and R. Ettinghausen, "The Wade Cup," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 327–66; H. al-Harithy, "The Ewer of Ibn Jaldak," pp. 355–68; and R. Kana'an, "Patron and Craftsman of the Freer Mosul Ewer of 1232," in this volume.
- 65 See, for example, the luster plate in the Penn Museum (NEP19) with inscription dated AH 608/1211 CE at Kashan, diameter 49.5 cm (*Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 5, pl. 710).
- 66 Radially composed decoration in Kashan is well attested; see the large luster plates at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (62.226 and 32.52.2), the Penn Museum (NEP19) and elsewhere, <http://asia.si.edu/research/articles/minai-battle-plate.asp>. Gierlichs, "A Victory Monument," p. 53, n. 34, citing I. Goldziher, proposes that the bird depicted between the victor and the vanquished alludes to the soul of the former. I see it mainly as part of the inhabited landscape motif; see pp. 199–200 in this volume.
- 67 Note the opinion of historians such as Vassaf who praised the atabeg Abū Bakr (died 1270) for keeping Shiraz safe from the horrors of the times. Ayatī al-Mohammad, ed., *Tahrir-i Tarikh-i Vassaf* (Tehran: Bonyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1349), pp. 91–92. In parallel ways, another atabeg (one of the Zangids), Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū' safeguarded Mosul, thus providing a refuge for many cultural specialists. It is no surprise then that both centers provided a continuum of patronage for the arts. On Badr al-Dīn Lū'lū', his patronage, and Mosul as a location for the arts, see C. Cahen, "Lu'lu', Badr al-Dīn Abu 'l-Faḍā'il al-Malik al-Rahīm," *EI2*; D. S. Rice, "The brasses of Badr al-din Lu'lu', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1950), pp. 627–34"; D. S. Rice, "Inlaid Brasses from the Workshop of Aḥmad al-Dhaki al-Mawwēlī," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 283–327; N. Ben Azzouna, "La Production de manuscrits en Iraq et en Iran occidental à l'époque des dynasties mongoles (Les Ilkhanides et les Djalayirides (658–814/1256–1411))" (PhD diss., École pratique des hautes études, Paris, 2009).

- 68 E. Whelan, *The Public Image: Political Iconography in Medieval Mesopotamia* (London: Melisande, 2006) discusses the way in which rulers, atabegs, and their emirs represented themselves. As a useful comparison of self-fashioning within power elites, see N. Rabbat, "In Search of a Triumphant Image: The Experimental Quality of Early Mamluk Art," *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria: Evolution and Impact*, ed. D. Behrens-Abouseif (Bonn: V&R Unipress, Bonn University Press, 2012), pp. 21–36. See Grabar, "Visual," *CHI*, vol. 5, on the idea of the tastes of the bourgeoisie or an urban visual culture. For a recent study of an urban elite, see D. Durand-Guédy, "The Khujandis of Isfahan," *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. C. Lange and S. Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 182–202; also his *Iranian elites and Turkish rulers. A history of Isfahān in the Saljūq period* (London: Routledge, 2010). The activation of collective social memory to make images of past events remains a topic to be explored further, particularly when the urban elites were not in particular harmony with the power holders' courts.
- 69 On the acculturation processes of the Turks, and the impact of Persian/Arab bureaucrats and the scholarly class on court culture, see Buniatov, *Gosudarstvo*, ch. 8; Meisami, "The Historian and the Poet" and "The Šah-nāme as a Mirror for Princes," *Pand-o-Sokhan*, ed. C. Balay, C. Kappler, and Ziva Vesel (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1995) pp. 265–74; C.-H. de Fouchécour, *Moralia Les notions morales dans la littérature persane du 3e/9e au 7e/13e siècle* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilizations, 1986), pp. 179–356; B. Gruendler and L. Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on their relationship from Abbasid to Safavid times* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), especially J. Meisami, "Rulers and The Writing of History," pp. 73–96, and L. Marlowe, "The Way of Viziers and the Lamp of Commanders," pp. 169–94; C. Hillenbrand, "Aspects of the Court of the Great Seljuqs," *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, pp. 22–38; also Blair, "A Brief Biography," pp. 162–65, on shared cultural understanding of literary and visual quotations.
- 70 Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, and also *Persian Lustre Ware* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985); O. Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory*, and "A World unto Himself: The Rise of the New Human Image in the Late Seljuk Period (1150–1250)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000), chapters 3 and 4, and in her "Potter's Trail: An Abu Zayd Ewer in the Saint Louis Art Museum" in *Metalwork and Material Culture in the Islamic World: Art, Craft and Text. Essays presented to James W. Allan*, edited by Venetia Porter and Mariam Rosser-Owen (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012). I thank Oya Pancaroğlu for her comments and for sharing this study with me prior to publication.

A SILVER “STAND” WITH EAGLES IN THE FREER GALLERY

Abstract

The Freer Gallery of Art in Washington owns an unusual and intriguing object of uncertain date, origin, provenance, and function that was published in the museum's catalogue of Islamic metalwork as number one and termed a “stand with four eagles.” Four solid-cast silver eagles stand facing out from the four corners of this small round openwork object, which has not subsequently been addressed by scholars. This article compares it to a number of metalwork objects, especially to censers, including examples that are likely or certainly pre-Islamic, early Islamic, and late Roman, some of which are also aviform or have one or more eagles arranged on the corners. Rather than attempting to fix a specific place or date for the Freer object, the article presents it as pertaining to a fascinating group that seems to cross cultural and geographic as well as modern disciplinary borders.

THE FREER GALLERY OF ART in Washington owns an unusual and intriguing object of uncertain date, origin, provenance, and function (fig. 1), published in the museum's catalogue of Islamic metalwork as number one and termed a “stand with four eagles.”¹ It is of solid silver, cast and chased, measuring 85 mm in height and 178 mm in width, and has four eagles equally spaced around a circular object with a broad flat ring at the bottom, on which the four eagles perch, and a tubular circle at the top resting on four vertical shafts. The object is tentatively attributed to Iran in the museum's catalogue, with a provincial Sasanian or post-Sasanian date proposed, but there are comparisons, none of them particularly close or specific either, also in Egypt, Anatolia, and elsewhere, including the Roman world. A single silver eagle in the Brooklyn Museum,² also measuring 85 mm in height, is so close in style, workmanship, and scale that it is plausible to suspect that it may stem from a second object like that now in the Freer (fig. 2).

The Freer catalogue says of the object's possible function only that it “must have been made to hold a medium-sized ovoid jar or vase,” without offering any specific comparisons.³ In my view, the hypothesis that the silver stand was a censer, or perhaps some part of a censer, deserves to be explored and is better supported by comparison to a remarkably diverse and intriguing group of analogues. The notion first came to my mind because of the iconographic and formal and material comparisons offered by the magnificent silver censer from the Sion Treasure (fig. 3), originating in the region of southern Turkey near northwest Syria, probably datable to the sixth century, purchased in 1963, and now at Dumbarton Oaks, also in Washington.⁴ Although much larger, measuring 150 mm high by 200 mm wide, the Sion Treasure censer, like the Freer stand, has solid-cast birds facing outwards, here in the form of peacocks rather than eagles, and in this case three of them rather



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1
Silver stand with eagles, 6th–8th century. Purchase, Freer Gallery of Art, F1953.92.

than four. Obviously the Freer stand cannot be a complete censer, for there is no container in which the incense could have been placed. If it was a censer, it would need to have had something set inside it, whether also of silver or possibly copper or conceivably glass or ceramic. Silver seems most likely, since much of the inner liner would be visible through the openwork decoration, although expecting such visual consistency may be an unwarranted transference of modern taste. Be that as it may, the late antique Kaper Koraon Treasure from northern Syria included a half-round silver bowl with curved base that must have had some kind of stand to hold it and might have been the inner part of a censer.⁵ That particular silver bowl is a bit too small, 115 mm wide, and too shallow, 43 mm deep, to make a good fit for the Freer stand, but it represents one type that might be imagined. Another plausible comparison from the same treasure is the “Antioch Chalice” now in the Metropolitan Museum, hailed by Gustavus Eisen in 1923 as the “Holy Grail” of medieval legend, the cup used at the Last Supper.⁶ It is a two-piece object, with the inner, undecorated silver “cup” set within an elaborate openwork silver frame decorated with images of the Apostles. The object dates not from the first but from the sixth century and was probably a lamp, certainly in any case not a chalice.⁷ The Sion Treasure included several silver openwork vessels, used as lamps, from which the inner liner is missing, supporting the possibility that the openwork silver stand in the Freer might have been either a lamp or a censer.⁸ One of the silver censers in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, from the Attarouthi Treasure, also from northern Syria and datable to the sixth or seventh century, shows just such an inner liner as the Freer example might have had, and lost, here in copper rather than silver.⁹

The possibility that the Freer stand might have served not as a part of a censer but as a stand into which a censer might be set was favored by several participants in the HIAA workshop at the Freer Gallery in 2010, where some of these ideas were



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Silver eagle. The Brooklyn Museum, New York, acc. no. 50.91.

first presented, but no one offered an example of such an object, and I have not been able to find one from late antiquity or early Islam. Such a function might account for the degree of wear visible on the inner, but not on the outer, surfaces of the eagles, although the use of a removable inner liner might have had that effect. Use as a stand for a censer rather than as a censer itself might also be thought to account for the lack of any mechanism for either swinging or carrying the object when in use. Christian censers generally do have some means for suspension from a chain, so that they might be swung, but in fact the swinging of censers, standard in Christian usage,¹⁰ appears not to have been the practice in non-Christian usage, whether in the Sasanian or the Islamic tradition.

We have, indeed, a significant number of censers, in varying forms and materials, if not necessarily made in the Islamic period or for a specifically Islamic function, then apparently in use during the Islamic period. The presence of the four outward-facing eagles on the Freer stand is strikingly analogous to a well-known object commonly referred to as a "brazier" excavated at an Umayyad palace site at al-Fudayn, which offers the best available comparison for the form of the rather ungainly and heavy-beaked eagles, with an expression somewhere between squawking and smirking.¹¹ A brazier is not a censer to be sure, or for that matter a lamp, although their functions are not so far apart as holders for slow-burning materials, but there are a number of indubitable censers likely to have been made or at least used in the early Islamic period that have some analogies with the Freer stand. For example, a stone censer from the citadel in Amman has four corner columns around a domed central chamber, with something tantalizingly unidentifiable, at least to me, atop each of the columns.¹² An eighth- or ninth-century bronze censer also in the Freer Gallery, acquired on the art market in 1952 and number two in its catalogue,¹³ has a lateral handle to be used for carrying it (fig. 4) and seems never to have been swung from a chain. Like the Amman censer, its form is architectural, a dome surrounded by four smaller domes on the top; moreover, atop each of the smaller domes perch eagles, two of which survive and two of which are broken off. Thus we have an early Islamic brazier and an early Islamic censer with eagles in the four corners, as on the Freer silver stand. The association of eagles with censers is apparently common in the early Islamic period. A bronze censer from Egypt has a single eagle on the top,¹⁴ although it is possible that this one was made for and used in a Coptic Christian, rather than an Islamic, context. Indeed, as one looks in detail, it becomes increasingly difficult to assign objects with certainty to one cultural tradition, or for that matter to one art-historical category or the other; the borders were clearly fluid, and not only between Islamic and Christian art.

It is noteworthy that the al-Fudayn brazier stems, unlike the Freer stand and the Brooklyn eagle, from an archaeological context, and its authenticity appears

beyond question. As in the more complex case of the Sion Treasure censer, it became known only after the date of acquisition of the Freer stand and Brooklyn eagle, and it supports the authenticity of those works and provides, in my view, the best *terminus ad quem* for its date and place of origin. It also supports the authenticity of some other aviform vessels and censers purchased on the art market in the earlier twentieth century. An important and well-known example of such an aviform metalwork object is a bronze eagle in Berlin (fig. 5), pierced for use as a censer, acquired for the museum by Friedrich Sarre from the art market in 1929, and published by him along with a group of related objects the following year.¹⁵ It is not certain whether, if it is indeed from Iran, as seemed most likely to Sarre and most subsequent scholars, it is Sasanian or post-Sasanian, i.e., Islamic, in date, so probably sixth to eighth century is a fair range. Date and origin and even identification as an eagle are all debatable.¹⁶ For the date, one of the best comparisons is the best known of the entire group of aviform metal vessels from the period (including as well as eagles, vessels identified as geese, ducks, and roosters), the example now in St. Petersburg, signed by Sulayman and dated 796–797 CE, in this case a pouring vessel rather than a censer.¹⁷ In 1987 Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar compared the Berlin eagle to the massive ewer with rooster spout now in Cairo, associated rightly or wrongly with the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II, who was buried near its supposed find-spot in the Fayum, and also to a simpler bronze ewer in the Hermitage with an inscription of 67 or 69 (circa 688–689) and the name of the city of Basra.¹⁸ On the whole, it does not seem to me that one can be definitive about the date of the eagle censer in Berlin, but a date in roughly the seventh century is clearly plausible for it, or at least it supports the view that censers in animal forms generally, and in the form of eagles in particular, were likely in use and in circulation at that period, more or less contemporary with the Umayyad constructions on the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. It seems to me that the Berlin censer provides support for the hypothesis that the Freer silver stand might be understood as a part of a censer, or if one prefers, a stand for a censer.

Geographical boundaries seem fluid at this period in terms of such objects. The previously cited bronze ewer often connected with Marwan II's burial and now in Cairo is generally thought to have been made in Iran, but it was found in Egypt. The dated ewer in the Hermitage has an inscription associating it with Basra, and the al-Fudayn brazier was excavated in greater Syria (modern Jordan). Most metal objects in our museums today have, alas, no firm evidence for either origin or early provenance, having come from the art market without such information, and throughout the medieval period they were an important category of prestige gift or booty, with sometimes remarkable travels.¹⁹ Objects moved, as did ideas, and may have changed in function and/or meaning as they crossed borders.²⁰ The stone incense



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3
Silver censer with peacocks, from the Sion Treasure, probably 6th century. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, acc. no. BZ.1965.1.5.T1993.

burner from the Umayyad governor's palace in Amman, domical in form, is made from basalt, a stone not found in the region. It must either have been made elsewhere and imported to Amman, or the stone itself was imported and then carved locally. Its origin and date can probably never be determined exactly; all we can say is that it was used in this early Islamic context. The same must be said for the brazier from al-Fudayn; its find-spot specifies its place of use and deposit, not its place of origin, and a general date range for its use, and a rough *terminus ante quem* for its manufacture. Image types moved across boundaries not only geographical but confessional, as can also be demonstrated in other media, for example, in stamped glass vessels.²¹ Paul Balog published a group of these, from his own collection, in which iconography, likely to have been Sasanian in origin and pre-Islamic in date, was continued into the Islamic period but with added inscriptions in Arabic letters and at least in some instances with explicitly Islamic content. For example, an image of a small peacock in profile of a type commonly associated with Sasanian art was, at least in Balog's view, engraved by "a Persian brought up in the traditions of Sasanian art, but with the words *bismi* and *allāh*, for 'in the name of god' along the edge."²²

If Julian Raby is correct, a class of objects associated specifically, although not exclusively, with Jerusalem and datable to the seventh century crosses geographic as well as confessional borders. These are glass vessels from perhaps the fifth to possibly the later seventh century that were used in connection with pilgrimages to Jerusalem, probably souvenirs of the holy places, by Muslims, Christians, and also Jews.²³ At least in some places and times Jews did have eagles in their synagogues, it seems; a notable example was found in the synagogue at Sardis. Probably the Sardis eagles were spoliated from a Roman imperial context, two plaques with eagles holding thunderbolts, perhaps from the older Roman bath on the site, and then re-employed as supports for a table in the center of the nave before the apse, likely used for readings from scripture.²⁴ The date at which the synagogue was founded is controversial, and Jodi Magness has recently made a strong case for the sixth rather than the late third or fourth century, but whatever its time of origin, it seems



4

4
Bronze censer with domes and eagles,
8th–9th century. Purchase, Freer
Gallery of Art, F1952.1.

to have continued in use until 616 CE, when the community was dispersed, after which the building was abandoned and eventually fell into ruin.²⁵ As in the case of the Dome of the Rock eagle capitals,²⁶ these very expensive and prestigious eagles were installed intact, but in this case were never effaced, and provide further proof that Jewish aniconism even in religious buildings was not total and did not extend to eagles, or in the case of the Sardis synagogue, to lions, for a pair of sculptured lions flanked the eagle table there.

That the arrangement of the four eagles of the Freer stand, facing outward, may have a connection with monumental architecture is suggested not only by the explicitly architectural form of the bronze censer in the Freer, with its single large and four smaller domes, and by the stone censer in Amman, but by a surviving monumental building. The impressive church at Zvart'noc' in Armenia, now in ruins, likely built near the time of and related to the imperial visit by Constans II with his army to the area in 653, has four eagle capitals, executed new for the church, arranged facing outward at the four corners of this remarkable aisled tetraconch.²⁷ Might the Freer stand be understood as a microcosmic version of the same iconographic impulse, the king of birds, heavily laden with symbolic import of victory and ascension and related to the imagery of rulership, and a cosmic setting for that rulership? There is, however, a more specific possible connection between the Freer stand, if understood as a censer, and other early Islamic censers already cited, and the greatest surviving Islamic building of the seventh century, the Dome of the Rock.

It may surprise some readers to learn, as it certainly surprised me, that a number of reports describe the ritual anointing of the Rock in Jerusalem in the Umayyad period, with a special guild appointed to execute this rite, and associated with that



5
Bronze eagle censer. Museum für
Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Inv. Nr.
I. 5623.

anointing and described in the same text is the use of gold and silver censers in the Dome of the Rock.²⁸ Incense was an Arabian product and commodity, both consumed and exported in large quantities, quantities so large that some scholars have suggested it was the basis of the wealth of Mecca and the Hijaz. I would definitely not claim that in the Freer stand we have one of those silver censers that were used in Jerusalem, but I would go so far as to say we may have in it something that reflects their form, and thereby one way of understanding the installation of eagle capitals in the Dome of the Rock and the presence of eagles on so many early Islamic censers. To the best of my knowledge, scholars have treated the texts concerning censuring of the site without any consideration of the extant censers from the period. To be sure, we have few texts and few images, and bringing such rare survivals together can be a perilously speculative undertaking, although Ockham's razor would urge us at least to consider the possibility. Perhaps the evidence, and the question, assembled here will at least serve to stimulate other scholars to address the fascinating silver stand in the Freer and its remarkable analogues.

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NOTES

- 1 Esin Atil, W. T. Chase, and Paul Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1985), cat. no. 1, pp. 55–57, including the statement that the object was “purchased from Heeramaneck Galleries, New York, 1953.” I am very grateful to Massumeh Farhad for permitting me to examine this object. At the second biennial conference of the Historians of Islamic Art Association, held at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in October 2010, I conducted a workshop devoted to the object, again with the kind permission of Dr. Farhad, and I would also like to thank the twenty participants in the workshop for their suggestions. I cannot name them all individually, but I particularly remember the helpful comments of Jonathan Bloom, Barry Flood, and Eva Hoffman. I am particularly grateful for the participation and comments of Paul Jett, the distinguished conservator at the Freer. In 2008 Eliza Butler wrote a seminar paper under my direction devoted to the object, and I learned much from that work.
- 2 Atil, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 57, fig. 19. The accession number of the object is 50.91. I am grateful to Ladan Akbarnia for making it possible for me to examine this object. According to the Brooklyn Museum files, the object came as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Alistair B. Martin in 1950; no further information as to provenance is available.
- 3 Atil, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 56.
- 4 See Susan Boyd and Marlia Mundell Mango, eds., *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth Century Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1992), no. 18, fig. S18.1 (before restoration) and S18.2 (after restoration); for a color plate after restoration, see Gudrun Bühl, ed., *Dumbarton Oaks, The Collections* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2008), pp. 96–97, and with other objects from the same hoard, pp. 90–91.
- 5 Marlia Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1986), no. 16, pp. 112–13, the object here suggested as perhaps for holding water used for bathing or baptism, and perhaps used in conjunction with the ewer in the same treasure.
- 6 Gustavus A. Eisen, *The Great Chalice of Antioch* (New York: Fahim Kouchakji, 1933). I am grateful to Francis Newton for giving me a copy of this strange and fascinating publication.
- 7 For discussion, see Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium*, no. 40, pp. 183–87.
- 8 See Susan Boyd, “A Bishop’s Gift: Openwork Lamps from the Sion Treasure,” in *Argenterie romaine et byzantine, Actes de la table ronde, Paris 11–13 octobre 1983*, ed. Noël Duval and François Baratte (Paris: de Bocard, 1989), pp. 191–202. Boyd and Mango, *Ecclesiastical Silver Plate*, nos. 41–48. One of them is illustrated in color in Bühl, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Collections*, pp. 94–95.
- 9 Helen C. Evans, in *Mirror of the Medieval World*, ed. William D. Wixom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), no. 46, pp. 37–38, pl. 46. The treasure contained three such silver censers with copper interior liners. The treasure also included a silver dove, with outstretched and removable wings, which hung over the altar, as in attested in several textual sources.
- 10 See the classic overview by Joseph Braun, *Das christliche Altargerät in seinem Sinn and in seiner Entwicklung* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1932), pp. 598–611 and figs. 494–504 on early censers.

- 11 Jordan Archaeological Museum, Amman, inv. nos. J 15700, 15701, and 15705. See Jean-Baptiste Humbert, "Le surprenant brasero omeyyade trouvé à Mafraḡ," in *Jordanie. Sur les pas des archéologues. Exposition présentée du 13 juin au 5 octobre 1997* (Paris: Institut du monde Arabe, 1997), p. 161, and *The Umayyads. The Rise of Islamic Art*, ed. Ghazi Bisheh et al. (Amman: Ministry of Tourism, Department of Antiquities, and Vienna: Museum with no Frontiers, 2000), pp. 133–35 on the al-Fudayn site, and pp. 67–68 on the brazier, and Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), p. 17 and fig. 4. See J. B. Humbert, "El-Fedein/Mafraq. École biblique et Archéologique Française," in *Contribution Française à l'archéologie Jordanienne* (Amman: Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1989), pp. 125–31, with an important series of drawings on p. 131, including details of the four nude figures and detailed views of one of the corner eagles, including a view from the back showing the hollow casting. I am grateful to Ghazi Bisheh for bringing this publication to my attention. Note here also, p. 130, a small bronze censer from the site with openwork frieze around the perimeter.
- 12 Amman, Jordan Archaeological Museum, inv. no. J 1663; see *The Umayyads*, pp. 69–70 (with illustration).
- 13 Atil, *Islamic Metalwork*, no. 2, pp. 58–61: "purchased from Mallon, New York, 1952."
- 14 Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 11798, reproduced in Atil, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 59, fig. 20. On this censer see *L'Islam dans les collections nationales* (Paris: Editions des Musées nationaux, 1977), no. 19.
- 15 Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, inv. no. I. 5623; Friedrich Sarre, "Bronzeplastik in Vogelform. Ein Sasanidisch-Frühislamisches Räuchergefäß," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 51 (1930), pp. 159–64, and Taf. 1.
- 16 Sarre, "Bronzeplastik," p. 161, n. 1.
- 17 Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 66 and fig. 100. In a 1971 catalogue entry, Johanna Zick-Nissen suggested an eighth-century date for the Berlin eagle censer by comparison to an "in fast gleicher Weise modellierte Vogelfigur (Eremitage-Museum) mit einer Inschrift, die das Datum 105 H/723–724 n. Chr. enthält"; see *Islamische Kunst in Berlin. Katalog, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin* (Berlin: Bruno Hessling Verlag, 1971), no. 234, pl. 37, pp. 68–69, which gives the inventory number I. 5623. I do not know this vessel, and it is hard to imagine that there are two dated metalwork eagles in the Hermitage from the eighth century, so I presume Zick-Nissen is referring to the Sulayman eagle, but she based her report of its date on Michael M. Diakonoff, "Bronze Sculpture in early Muhammadan art," in *Travaux du Département Oriental, Musée de l'Ermitage IV* (Leningrad: Musée de l'Ermitage, 1947), pp. 159–79 (in Russian, with summary in English on pp. 178–79), and that the inscription has subsequently been reread and the date changed.
- 18 See Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, *The art and architecture of Islam, 650–1250* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 71 and fig. 47, illustrating the Berlin eagle; the dated ewer is not illustrated. For the Cairo ewer, see also Bernard O'Kane, *The Treasures of Islamic art in the Museum of Cairo* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2006), p. 21, fig. 11.
- 19 See, for example, the especially intriguing perhaps ninth-century bronze aquamane that wound its way to S. Frediano in Lucca, for which see *Lucca e l'Europa. Un'idea di medioevo V–XI secolo* (Lucca: Fondazione Centro Studi Ragghianti, 2010), nos. 90–91, pp. 196–201, where in the thirteenth century it became a rooster! I am grateful to Lamia Balafrej for bringing this work to my attention and for providing material from the just-published exhibition and catalogue. See also in general on gifts the recent exhibition and accompanying catalogue, Linda Komaroff, ed., *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2011).
- 20 On this phenomenon for a slightly later period, see Eva R. Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian interchange from the tenth to the twelfth century," *Art History* 24 (2001), pp. 17–50. For more on gifts, see Komaroff, ed., *Gifts of the Sultan*.
- 21 Paul Balog, "Sasanian and Early Islamic Ornamental Glass Vessel-Stamps," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History, Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. Dickran K. Kouymjian (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974), pp. 131–40.
- 22 Balog, "Sasanian and Early Islamic Ornamental Glass Vessel-Stamps," no. 5, p. 137.
- 23 Julian Raby, "In Vitro Veritas. Glass pilgrim vessels from 7th-century Jerusalem," in *Bayt al-Maqdis. Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. Jeremy Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX, pt. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 113–90. See E. Marianne Stern, *The Toledo Museum of Art Roman Mold-blown Glass. The First through Sixth Centuries* (Rome: L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 1995), with descriptions, photo-

- graphs (some in color), and drawings of 193 examples, and an earlier dating of these objects.
- 24 *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times. Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, 1958–1975*, ed. George M. A. Hanfmann and William E. Mierse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 168–90, for the eagle table p. 170 and figs. 256–62. The dating of the sculpture is uncertain, and the date of its installation in the synagogue is also uncertain. Hanfmann and Mierse report (p. 170) that the eagle table was a relatively late addition to the complex, since it stands atop and interrupts the mosaic floor, and thus postdates the mid-fourth-century date proposed for the mosaic.
 - 25 Jodi Magness, “The Date of the Sardis Synagogue in Light of the Numismatic Evidence,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 109 (2005), pp. 443–75, especially p. 449 and fig. 6 on the eagle supports for the table in the nave and p. 449 n. 24 for a list of eagles (and lions) in Palestinian synagogues; the association of the eagles with doorways is striking. For a much longer list of eagles in Palestinian synagogues, see the unpublished master’s thesis written under the direction of Professor Magness by Steven H. Werlin, “Eagle Imagery in Jewish Relief Sculpture of late ancient Palestine: Survey and Interpretation,” University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2006 (http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISO_ROOT=/etd&CISOPTR=646) (accessed March 10, 2011).
 - 26 These fascinating works, never heretofore studied in relation to their Islamic context and meaning, will be a major focus of my forthcoming book *Perspectives on Early Islamic Art in Jerusalem*. In the interim, the capitals are published in John Wilkinson, *Column Capitals in al Haram al Sharif (from 138 A.D. to 1118 A.D.)* (Jerusalem: The Adm. of Wakfs and Islamic Affairs, and the Islamic Museum al-Haram al-Sharif, 1987).
 - 27 Christina Maranci, “Byzantium through Armenian Eyes. Cultural Appropriation and the Church of Zuart’noc,” *Gesta* 40 (2001), pp. 105–24.
 - 28 Amikan Elad, “Why did ‘Abd al-Malik build the Dome of the Rock? A Re-examination of the Muslim Sources,” in *Bayt al-Maqdis. ‘Abd al-Malik’s Jerusalem*, ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX, pt. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 33–58. The passage is cited by Raby, “*In Vitro Veritas*,” who uses the translation by Guy Le Strange, *Palestine Under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500*, translated from the works of the mediaeval Arab geographers (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1890), pp. 146–47.

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ARS ORIENTALIS VOLUME 43

Earlier versions of these papers were presented at "Imperial Exposure: Early Photography and Royal Portraits across Asia," a symposium organized by the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and held at the Freer Gallery in December 2011.

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PREFACE

THE IMPERIAL PORTRAITS illustrated on the next page date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and present rulers from empires across Asia: the kingdom of Siam, Qajar Iran, Qing China, and Meiji Japan. In all cases, the seated rulers wear appropriate imperial dress and are posed with carefully selected objects to create a particular impression. These are professional works that engage viewers with an international language of portraiture, of imperial power, and of photography. Despite the obvious similarities, there are also significant differences: details of dress, setting, and objects associated with the subject are all culturally specific and indicate the degree to which local photographic practice was shaped by the particular artistic and cultural traditions out of which it emerged. This volume of *Ars Orientalis* presents eleven articles that use the images illustrated here and many others to explore the emergence of portrait photography across Asia at a moment when empires around the globe were experimenting with the new medium of photography as a means of claiming power and communicating royal identity.

Earlier versions of these papers were presented at the scholarly conference “Imperial Exposure: Early Photography and Royal Portraits across Asia,” held at the Freer Gallery of Art in December 2011. A collaboration of the archives, scholarly programs, and curatorial departments of the museums, the conference accompanied the groundbreaking exhibition *Power|Play: China’s Empress Dowager* at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. This extraordinary collection of photographic portraits of Empress Dowager Cixi belongs to the museums’ archives. Both the conference and the exhibition are part of a continuing effort on the part of the Freer and Sackler Galleries to delve into historic and contemporary photography in Asia through exhibitions, research, and public programs.

These efforts, particularly concerning the history of photography in Asia, are found in other recent publications and exhibitions. The history of photography is a relatively young intellectual enterprise, having come of age as a subfield within the history of art in the 1970s. The history of photography in Asia is younger still, and with new collections coming to light in long-overlooked public institutions and private collections across Asia, it is an unevenly known and researched subject. While photographic practice in imperial capitals is generally well understood, for instance, it is often not yet possible to reconstruct the history of photography in smaller cities and more remote areas.

Even though a great deal of basic research is still needed to construct the photographic history of much of Asia, important new exhibitions and a growing body of exciting, issue-driven scholarship about this emerging body of material are being made public. To highlight only a few examples, the journal *History of Photography* occasionally publishes themed issues of relevance to this discussion, most recently



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

John Thomson, *King Mongkut of Siam*, 1866, modern albumen print from wet collodion negative, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, Wellcome Collection, London, copy in National Library of Scotland.

Eduardo Chiossone and Maruki Toshihiro, Suzuki Kazuma, *Meiji tennō goshon'ei*, 1888–89, photographic reproduction of a conte crayon sketch. The Alice Roosevelt Longworth Collection of Photographs from the 1905 Taft Mission to Asia. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Gift of Joanna Sturm, 2009. A2009.02.05a

Antoin Sevruguin, *Nasir al-Din Shah on the Peacock Throne*, ca. 1880. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, FSA A.1501.

Liang Shitai (See Tay), *Portrait of Li Hongzhang*, 1878, albumen print. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2006.R.1.4).

The First 100 Years of Iranian Photography in 2013. In 2011 the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Museum each organized extensive exhibitions of historic photography from Asia accompanied by major catalogues: *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China* and *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road*. The online project *Trans Asia Photography Review* (TAP), founded in 2010 and appearing twice yearly, consistently publishes innovative work on aspects of photography in Asia from both historical and contemporary contexts. TAP's spring 2013 issue, *Local Culture/Global Photography*, looks at many of the same topics addressed in this volume of *Ars Orientalis*.

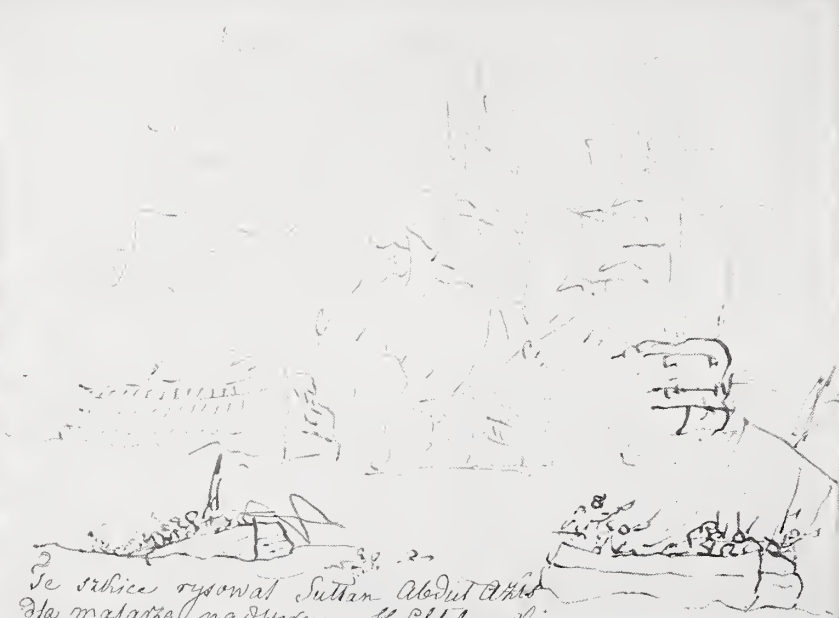
The eleven authors whose work is presented here approach the history of photography from different disciplinary perspectives and focus their attention on a range of cultures and time periods. Using geography as a rough mode of organization, the volume begins in the Ottoman Empire and moves east through Iran, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea, ending with four articles that examine various aspects of Chinese imperial portraiture. At the core of each essay is a concern with the historic specificity of the circumstances of photographic production and the materiality of the images. The authors look at a series of other issues as well: the intersection of photography with other media, particularly drawing and painting; the dissemination and intended audience for photographic portraits as well as their impact on those audiences; the manner in which traditional means of presenting imperial identity were absorbed and perhaps altered by the medium; the establishment of new imperial modes of communication using photography; and the continuing influence of traditional modes of representation in contemporary royal portraiture.

In nearly all cases, the articles included here are part of larger research projects by their respective authors, and we encourage you to pursue their related work in other publishing venues. We hope you find this volume of *Ars Orientalis* as stimulating and engaging to read as we have found it to produce. We welcome your comments.

Nancy Micklewright is head of scholarly programs and publications at the Freer and Sackler Galleries and is a specialist in the history of Ottoman photography.



Sultan
Abdul Aziz



Ze szkice rysował Sultan Abdul Aziz
dla malatna nadwornego W. Chlebowski



Stanisław
Chlebowski
Malatna nadworna
Sultana

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OTTOMAN STATECRAFT AND THE “PENCIL OF NATURE”

Photography, Painting, and Drawing at the Court of Sultan Abdülaziz

Abstract

In the 1860s and early 1870s, Sultan Abdülaziz utilized painting and photography in concert to fashion a triumphant historical image of the Ottoman dynasty and its modernizing contemporary state. Through close study of the sultan's drawings and other archival sources in Poland and Istanbul, this article reveals that his personal engagement with the visual arts had a more sustained and systematic relationship to contemporary Ottoman statecraft than has been previously conceived. This article provides the first detailed analysis connecting Sultan Abdülaziz's sketches to specific battle paintings by Stanisław Chlebowski held in Istanbul in the Dolmabahçe Palace and the Military Museum, and it reveals that this was a unique, intimate artistic collaboration. On the basis of the Polish artist's sketchbook held in the National Museum in Warsaw, I also reconstruct unlocated Ottoman group portraits commissioned by Fuad Paşa for the inauguration of Sultan Abdülaziz's Beylerbeyi Palace. Between 1908 and 1914, selections of the sultan's sketches were published in art journals in Poland, England, and the Ottoman empire. The paintings and photographs served the politics of the modernizing state during Abdülaziz's reign, and by the early twentieth century his sketches sustained a developing narrative of Ottoman, and later, Turkish modern art.¹

ON AN ALBUM PAGE in the National Museum in Krakow, the thick cardboard mounts of two *cartes de visite* about the assured markings of a red ink sketch of the Ottoman fleet (fig. 1). The shaky pen of the album's creator, S. Czaykowska, specifies that this sketch is the product of a most unusual collaboration between her friend, the Polish artist Stanisław Chlebowski (1835–1884), shown on the right, and his patron, the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz, on the left. Two forms of indexicality are brought into conjunction on this page, as the immediacy of the photographic portraits specify and certify the authorship of the drawing that they frame. What makes this sketch so noteworthy, both then and now, is that it is not by the hand of the European artist but by his patron, the sultan. Remarkably, this red ink sketch is one among seventy-six by Abdülaziz that form the basis for a large series of historical paintings executed by Chlebowski.² The visual rhetoric of immediacy is what makes these photographs and drawings so compelling. While the photograph's power is hinged to its modern, seemingly unmediated depiction of the eastern ruler, the gestural energy of the sultan's sketches unequivocally convey their creator's commitment to his history painting project while they also reveal his agency in their execution. This was no conventional commission. In a surprising departure from more familiar regal patronal relations, this was a unique, intimate artistic collaboration.

¹ Sultan Abdülaziz, *Turkish Fleet*, ca. 1865–72, ink on paper affixed on page of a commemorative album owned by Seweryna Szembek Czaykowska, 19.2 x 23.3 cm, National Museum in Krakow. Inv. No. MNK III-r.a.-6689. (Left: Abdullah Frères, *Sultan Abdülaziz, carte de visite*. Center: Sultan Abdülaziz, *Turkish Fleet*, red ink on paper. Right: A. Szubert, *Stanisław Chlebowski, carte de visite*.)

Sultan Abdülaziz (reigned 1861–76) is well known for his patronage of modern visual culture: he formed an important collection of contemporary European painting for the palace and was the first Ottoman sultan to authorize the production of his photographic portrait.³ It is his eventual successor, Sultan Abdülhamid II, however, who is remembered for harnessing photography as part of Ottoman statecraft, most notably through the impressive albums presented to the United States and Britain in 1893 and 1894. This photographic survey of the Ottoman empire has been appropriately dubbed an “imperial self-portrait.”⁴ It is my proposition that his predecessor, Sultan Abdülaziz, was just as systematically engaged in crafting and disseminating an image of the modern sultanate through visual culture, utilizing the combined resources of painting, drawing, and photography and putting them into the service of contemporary statecraft for both foreign and local elite audiences. This article thus augments extant scholarly studies that have revealed Abdülaziz’s sustained engagement with the architectural commissions for his palaces and the official use of photography and print technologies to represent the empire, particularly at the 1873 international exposition in Vienna, during the later years of his reign.⁵

Through a close study of the sultan’s drawings and other archival sources in Poland and Istanbul, my analysis reveals that the sultan’s personal engagement with the visual arts had a more sustained and systematic relationship to contemporary Ottoman statecraft than has been previously conceived. In the 1860s and early 1870s, Sultan Abdülaziz utilized painting and photography in concert to fashion a triumphant historical image of the Ottoman dynasty and its modernizing contemporary state. While the portraits that Abdülaziz commissioned from Abdullah Frères presented a modern image of the Ottoman ruler, the historic battle paintings he ordered from Chlebowski positioned Ottoman history as a bulwark for the contemporary empire. This research also reveals that these projects were instigated through a patronal network rather than emerging from the agency of a single actor. While the sultan was the ultimate arbiter of most of this regal imagery, he was not its sole instigator. Up until his death in 1869, the powerful statesman Fuad Paşa emerges as a lynchpin within this network. The conjoined history of the production and reception of these sketches, battle paintings, and portraits within the Ottoman empire and in Europe augments understanding of Sultan Abdülaziz’s distinctive approach to visual culture and patronage.

Ottoman Networks

Two early commissions demonstrate how instrumental Grand Vezier Fuad Paşa (1815–1869) was in collaborating with the sultan to create the image of the modern sultanate. It was Fuad Paşa who had introduced the photographic firm Abdullah



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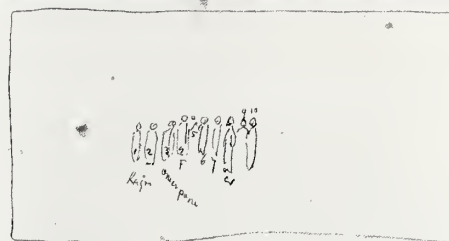
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Stanisław Chlebowski, page 16
from Chlebowski's Constantinople
sketchbook (detail), 1864, pencil
on paper, 22 x 29.6 cm, National
Museum in Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys.
Pol. 13005/16.

3

3

Stanisław Chlebowski, page 18
from Chlebowski's Constantinople
sketchbook (detail), 1864, pencil
on paper, 22 x 29.6 cm, National
Museum in Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys.
Pol. 13005/18.



1 Osman ridge 5 Halil 6. Selim paşa
2 Kaimakam 6. Osman 7 Osman
3 Osman 7. Mustafa paşa 10. İzzet
4 Fuad

Raviz jume artho

Muharrir p/ichodj.

Mulimov ad kavaleri

adjuvant in T. Razam

Museyn paşa

Said affand

Sari

Rauf bey.

Ojemet bey.

Frères to the sultan in 1863 after an unsuccessful sitting with another local firm.⁶ Widely circulated in their day, photographs that resulted from this and later sittings remain the best-known images of Sultan Abdülaziz. His contemporary military dress uniform and the choice to engage with the medium of photography signified the modernity of the Ottoman head of state. Equally significant in Ottoman palace circles, but currently unknown in the literature on Abdülaziz's image making in the early 1860s, are four paintings of the sultan and his military elites commissioned by Fuad Paşa from Stanisław Chlebowski a year after the sultan's first photographic portrait. The installation of these portraits at the time of the inauguration of the sultan's Beylerbeyi Palace demonstrates how important group portraiture was within Ottoman state ceremonies during the early years of his reign.

Chlebowski traveled to Istanbul in 1864 at the behest of Fuad Paşa. He was invited to join the Ottoman army encamped near Istanbul upon his arrival, and from there he was to undertake field studies for a group portrait commission.⁷ The two oil sketches he produced were examined by Fuad and others at the camp and later shown to Abdülaziz, who approved the commission. While the four final paintings resulting from this commission are unlocated, in my view a sketchbook in the National Museum in Warsaw contains many of the preliminary drawings.⁸ Comparing these field studies and three related documents about the paintings enables us to reconstruct their process of production and to establish their contemporary significance.⁹

The first painting included more than fifty portraits of the sultan, his son, and his nephew among senior Ottoman political, naval, and military figures.¹⁰ Five pages of the Warsaw sketchbook are dedicated to careful portrait studies of some of these individuals. Beneath each portrait sketch are the name and rank delineated in Ottoman in a hand that is so proficient in the cursive Ottoman script that it is evidently not that of Chlebowski (fig. 2). The page that follows the portraits displays a ten-figure diagram with names annotated below (fig. 3). Some of these names correspond to the portraits on the previous pages and to the individuals identified in the textual description of the group portrait.¹¹ The Ottoman ruler is situated amidst his most senior political, administrative, and military elites. This network of Ottoman alliances incorporates leaders from the Department of the



4

4
Stanisław Chlebowski, page 10
from Chlebowski's Constantinople
sketchbook (detail), 1864, pencil on
paper, 22 x 29.6 cm, National Museum
in Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys. Pol. 13005/10.



5
Stanisław Chlebowski, "The first
regiment of foot soldiers," page 2
from Chlebowski's Constantinople
sketchbook (detail), 1864, pencil
and watercolor on paper, 22 x
29.6 cm, National Museum in
Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys. Pol. 13005/2.

General Staff and the Imperial Army as well as Halil Paşa, the head of the Tophane Arsenal, and senior representatives from the major branches of the army, with foot soldiers, cavalry, and artillery among them. The group also includes representatives from the ministries of internal and foreign affairs, Saib Bey and Said Efendi. Fuad Paşa, the painting's commissioner, has a central place within this grouping. (He is number four in the diagram.) At the time he was both grand vezier (prime minister) and *serasker* (commander of the armed forces).¹² In addition to his distinguished military service during the Crimean War, Fuad was well known in Europe through his service in the ministry of foreign affairs, which included postings in Spain, Portugal, and England, and for playing a key role in negotiating major conflicts such as those in Bucharest and Lebanon.¹³ Renowned as one of the most powerful men of his era, he was one of the three key statesmen who advanced the modernizing reforms of the Tanzimat period. Fuad's portrait commission was an effective vehicle for commemorating the seniority of its commissioner and for underscoring his privileged relationship to the Ottoman leader for whom the work was intended.

Two early compositional studies for this work reveal that this group portrait was set outside, near the encampment. They delineate the topography of the site and the sultan's magnificent ceremonial tent situated on a raised mound. In the pencil sketch (fig. 4), the sultan stands to the left of center, with the senior Ottomans on the right and his horse and attendants on the left.¹⁴ He is slightly isolated from both groups as a mark of status.¹⁵ The second of the four paintings in the Fuad Paşa commission was also a complex multifigure portrait incorporating infantry, cavalry, and artillery as a way to represent the stratifications of the contemporary Ottoman military through its system of ranks. Seven pages of Chlebowski's sketchbook contain meticulously observed watercolor drawings of these costumed figures, each with their regiments or battalions annotated in Polish in the top left corner. Page two, for example, is a drummer from the first regiment of foot soldiers (fig. 5).

Most of the drawings in this sketchbook relate to the first two paintings in the series of four. One aerial view on the back of page ten, however, could be a



6

6

Stanisław Chlebowski, page 18
from Chlebowski's Constantinople
sketchbook (detail), 1864, pencil
on paper, 22 x 29.6 cm, National
Museum in Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys.
Pol. 13005/18.

preliminary study for the third work, which is characterized in contemporary documents as a general view of the military encampment of Levent Çiftliği at sunrise. So, too, the topographical sketch on the top of page eighteen (fig. 6) is likely to have been rendered for the fourth painting, which shows the sultan on horseback overlooking military exercises on the shores of the Bosphorus at Emirgan. This location facilitated the inclusion of warships, thus incorporating both branches of the armed forces.¹⁶ Several other full and partial compositional sketches are related to this project, but they less obviously correspond to the written accounts of the final paintings. Produced at an experimental stage, these field sketches were no doubt subject to numerous revisions as Chlebowski incorporated feedback from Sultan Abdülaziz, Fuad Paşa, and other Ottoman interlocutors.

Upon completion, the four paintings were publicly exhibited for eight days at the Galatasaray Barracks starting on April 1, 1865. *Journal de Constantinople*, a local newspaper, invited its readers to view them before they were relocated to the throne room of Beylerbeyi Palace. Their installation there after April 8 coincided with the palace's inauguration on the twenty-first of that month, an event celebrated by elaborate public ceremony. The festivities commenced with a military parade and gun salute at the Dolmabahçe Palace, then the sultan crossed the Bosphorus, which was crowded with Ottoman warships. Upon disembarking on the Asian shore, Abdülaziz led the official *selamlık* ceremony at the Beylerbeyi mosque, after which he entered his new palace by passing through a parade of officials in ceremonial dress. The account of this event in the local newspaper *Tercüman-ı Ahval* specifies the monetary gifts bestowed by the sultan on the imperial galleons, frigates, steamships, and corvettes and to each battalion of soldiers.¹⁷ The following day an audience was held in the official apartments, where the ministers swore allegiance to the sultan.

For the duration of the inauguration, the Bosphorus and the palaces on either side of this waterway were transformed into a stage on which the military, naval, and administrative elites joined to celebrate the sultanate and the empire. Fuad Paşa's commission was particularly appropriate to this event. Portraits of many of those who were involved and who pledged allegiance to the sultan inside his new

palace were represented in the four paintings that celebrated him as supreme commander of a disciplined modern force. The group portrait emphasized the affiliated network of the sultan's military and administrative elites, while the poetic evocation of a new dawn in the painting of the encampment at sunrise resonated with his ambitions for military and naval regeneration and expansion.¹⁸ The accompanying paintings presented an organized and disciplined modern force engaged in the rigors of military training in preparation for combat in the field. Such themes harmonized with the decorative program of the Beylerbeyi Palace interior, where images of naval vessels decorated the ceiling along with calligraphic invocations of Ottoman victory, justice, and prosperity. Fuad Paşa's gift was appropriately targeted in this context; he clearly understood the importance of the Beylerbeyi Palace project to the sultan. (Serkis Balyan, the sultan's architect, relayed the monarch's personal involvement with all stages of the creative planning of his architectural commissions, even working on the plans "avec un crayon rouge.")¹⁹ While the sultan's photographic portraits were widely circulated in Istanbul and beyond, his group portraits had a contingent relationship to the ceremonial function of his new palace.

An oil sketch for a ceremonial group portrait with stronger historical resonances introduces yet another dimension to the sultan's complex image creation. Titled *Sultan Abdülaziz in the Topkapı Palace Courtyard* (fig. 7), this oil sketch in the National Museum in Krakow affirms the sultan's legitimacy through an iconographic and performative reiteration of ceremonial ritual conducted by his forebears. Contemporary Ottoman military, administrative, and religious elites pay homage to the sultan at a reception in front of the Bâbü's-Sa'ade (Gate of Felicity) in the second courtyard of the historic Ottoman palace, a ceremonial venue for the public appearances of sultans over the centuries.²⁰ Here, Sultan Abdülaziz stands in the place of his dynastic predecessors. As with the Fuad Paşa commission, group portraiture is used in this painting to commemorate the ceremonial performance of state power. This painting, however, utilizes a similar compositional format to an earlier work in the palace collection by Kostantin Kapıdağlı that depicts Sultan Selim III presiding over an audience in the same location around 1789.²¹ Chlebowski's contemporary group portrait thereby accrues densely layered historical iconographic associations.

While the sultan's group portraits played a key role in palace ceremonies for Abdülaziz and his elites, lending allegorical and historical gravitas to his appearance, his photographic portraits ensured that for the first time the ruler's image was more widely available to local and foreign audiences. His photograph was also used to create the miniature portraits that Chlebowski and others were commissioned to paint. While the production of the sultan's portrait in the *carte de visite* format



7

7
Stanisław Chlebowski, *Sultan Abdulaziz in the Topkapı Palace Courtyard*, ca. 1865–76, oil on canvas, 23.5 x 39.5 cm, National Museum in Krakow. Inv. No. MNK II-a-1121.

meant his image was available in a more economical form, his miniature portraits were luxury items, like the medals and awards that were also created during his reign and were bestowed by the sultan on his statesmen and on foreign visitors.²² These *cartes de visite*, miniature portraits, and medals enabled the dissemination of the sultan's image beyond the palace as intimate, portable objects.

Ottoman Ornamentalism

The Ottoman regal photographic portraits were disseminated further still when they were used as the basis for the sultan's representation in illustrated newspapers from major European capitals that he visited in 1867. Since this was the first-ever European voyage of an Ottoman sultan, it was an initial chance to see the leader of the famed Ottoman dynasty in European metropolises, and the trip attracted great media attention. The occasion for the voyage was the international exposition in Paris, and the sultan articulated the diplomatic objectives of his journey in a speech he delivered in London, where he asserted that the aim was "to establish, not only among my own subjects, but between my people and the other nations of Europe, that feeling of brotherhood which is the foundation of human progress and the glory of our age."²³ Despite the mismatch between this diplomatic rhetoric and the realities of the political tensions and economic inequalities between the Ottoman empire and the most powerful European states in this period, both the sultan's oratory and the visual statements delivered through photographs and paintings that the Ottoman empire displayed at the international exposition delivered a clear message about the empire's claim to an equal standing among the community of European nations.²⁴

The account of the Ottoman pavilion in the official catalogue attests to the centrality of Sultan Abdülaziz's photographic and painted portraits. Royal portraiture formed a hinge between the long-standing tradition of representing the Ottoman sultans through painting and the current sultan's embrace of the modern medium of photography.²⁵ The sultan's official photograph was hung among a carefully chosen grouping of eminent Ottoman and French political, diplomatic, and religious

figures as a visual assertion of the ideals of affiliation that he sought to bolster. As the earlier commission by Fuad Paşa utilized portraiture to stress networks of elite Ottoman affiliation, the Paris installation translated that aspiration into the international arena. Portraiture was not the only genre brought into service in this context. Two of four panoramas by Abdullah Frères were taken from the Beyazıt tower (the Ottoman military headquarters). They encompass the famous monuments of the old city in the midground, including the Hagia Sophia and the great royal mosques seen from a symbolic vantage point of Ottoman power. These were deliberate, careful choices about how to stage the Ottoman empire photographically in Paris in 1867 that pivoted around the image of the sultan.

At each of the European capitals he visited, Sultan Abdülaziz was officially received with great pomp and ceremony. His every move was reported in the press, and the Abdullah Frères portraits that sartorially conveyed the sultan's deliberate self-styling as a modern monarch were repeatedly reproduced. An account from the *Times* (London) provides a sense of how jarring this modern image of the sultan was for some European viewers who evidently expected a more exotic Eastern spectacle.

Perhaps a prevalent sentiment in the minds of many here who looked upon Abdul-Aziz was a feeling of astonishment that he wore no turban nor baggy trousers, that he did not look in the least like the Saracen's head, that when he sat down he did not tuck his legs under him like a true-begotten Turk, but that he dressed and sat like a Christian—and, like a Christian, also looked melancholy and ineffably bored.²⁶

When the sultan sat for his portrait while in London, the photographs were taken by William Downey, Queen Victoria's royal photographer. These portraits of the sultan, his son, and his nephew were photographed within the apartments of Buckingham Palace. The resulting images of the modern sultan, taken in the heart of the British imperial capital, were a visual confirmation of the rhetoric of affiliation articulated in the sultan's speech. Circulated widely, the photographs were an eloquent visual testament of the intimate alliance between the two royal households and thus the affiliation between the Ottoman and British empires. Perhaps it was hoped that such photographs would contradict those at home and abroad who remained skeptical about the Ottoman-British alliance. Photography was also put into service to commemorate this visit when a profile portrait of the sultan was supplied for the purposes of creating a medal to commemorate a reception held at the Guildhall in London on July 18 in his honor.²⁷ These historic photographs demonstrate that in the Ottoman empire, as in other European nations, the new medium

of photography was taking its place alongside painting and print media within the commemorative rituals of formal international state visits.

The costly celebrations and military reviews held on the occasion of the sultan's visit to Paris and London were understood to be of particular political importance. Reporting on the sultan's visit, the journalist for the *Times* succinctly characterized the value of such pageantry in London.

It is the habit of foreign rulers to measure the cordiality of their hosts by these outward indications of respect, and so long as the country maintains the apparatus of pageantry it will be gratified at finding it employed on those occasions when it may have a real political importance.²⁸

Ceremonies for Sultan Abdülaziz were carefully crafted and even given a novel musical component at the performances celebrating his visit. Most notably, a hybrid choral composition with "oriental" melodic accents, an *Ode to the Sultan* with music by Luigi Arditi and words by Zafiraki Efendi, was performed during a royal command performance at the Crystal Palace. Soloists accompanied by a large British choir sang this ode in Ottoman, which was phonetically transcribed into Latin script. (An English translation was published in the *Times* the following day.)²⁹ The sultan must have also been particularly delighted to hear his own composition, *La Gondole Barcarolle*, played by the band of the Grenadier Guards when he dined with the Prince of Wales at his residence at Marlborough House.³⁰

As well as shoring up relations through such personalized royal hospitality, the grander ceremonial events were vehicles for displaying British imperial splendor. The decorations in India House for the ball held in honor of the sultan, for example, showcased "a huge tiger's head and shoulders ... in gold ... a trophy from the treasure-house of Tippoo Sultan,"³¹ a reminder of imperial conquest in British India, while the courtyard's sculptural decoration highlighted Britain's international alliances. Such calculated spectacles of imperial power, or "Ornamentalism," to invoke David Cannadine's term, impressed the sultan and no doubt affirmed the value of his own engagement with visual culture as part of Ottoman statecraft.³²

In Paris and London, the sultan was hosted at a number of venues where imperial supremacy was celebrated through triumphalist historic visual narratives. In Paris he was taken to the Hôtel des Invalides and shown Napoleon's tomb and the refectory battle cycles painted by Parrocel for Louis XIV. Additionally, he was hosted at Versailles, where he saw the Galerie des Glaces and the Galerie des Batailles—the memorial that recreated French military history for a modern audience under the reformist monarchy of Louis Philippe in the early nineteenth century. In London the sultan visited the Houses of Parliament, where he admired Maclise's prominent



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Sultan Abdülaziz, sketch for *The Pitched Battle of Mohaç*, ca. 1865–72, ink on paper affixed on page 14 of an album of the sultan's sketches, 26.7 x 17.4 cm, National Museum in Krakow. Inv. No. MNK III-r.a. 10325.

and recently completed British battle paintings *Death of Nelson* and *Meeting of Wellington and Blücher*.³³ The important public role for historic battle paintings within these venues in London and Paris no doubt affirmed the value of the sultan's most significant painting commission, which was already well underway in Istanbul. Differences in composition, narrative priorities, and aesthetic language, however, underscore the distinctiveness of the sultan's Ottoman history cycle.

Modern Ottoman History

While the photographic portraits circulated during Abdülaziz's reign provide ample evidence of the sultan's pragmatic recognition that this was the new way for modern monarchs to present themselves on the world stage, his sketches for Stanisław Chlebowski's battle painting series convey his personal passion for the visual arts. Abdülaziz was directly involved with his architectural projects and even boldly commissioned his own freestanding equestrian portrait from the British sculptor Charles Fuller in 1872.³⁴ The most persuasive evidence for his investment in the project of statecraft through visual culture is the large cache of the sultan's sketches, now housed in Krakow, that relates to a series of battle paintings he commissioned Chlebowski to produce. Examining these sketches and paintings reveals the sultan's distinctive approach to interpreting Ottoman history.

Only two of the paintings among this large commission of twenty-six works, now divided between the Dolmabahçe Palace and the Military Museum in Istanbul, are signed and dated by the Polish artist. Except for these two paintings, their attribution has been uncertain, and they are currently designated "School of Chlebowski."³⁵ However, a comparative analysis of the paintings and their related sketches, drawn by the sultan and Chlebowski and now housed in Poland, confirms the paintings to be the work of Chlebowski. Nevertheless, beyond the new certainty of attribution that I present here, these paintings, sketches, and inscriptions provide an Ottoman vision of the past that was collaboratively created by the sultan and the Polish artist.

The vast number of red ink sketches that Abdülaziz created as a guide to his court painter includes compositional designs as well as numerous smaller drawings



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Stanisław Chlebowski, *The Pitched Battle of Mohaç*, ca. 1865–72, oil on canvas, 112 x 175 cm, Harbiye Askeri Müzesi Koleksiyonu. Inv. No. 342.

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Stanisław Chlebowski, study for *The Pitched Battle of Mohaç*, ca. 1865–72, pencil on paper, 27 x 39.8 cm, National Museum in Warsaw. Inv. No. Rys. Pol. 1966.

that delineate the pose and gesture of combatants and convey information about Ottoman historic costume, weaponry, and military standards. All of the sultan's sketches exhibit a robust energy and are executed with deft strokes in sweeping, confident lines. This corpus provokes a vacillating affective response where imaginative transport is intermittently interrupted by the missteps of the striving amateur draftsman. Their irresolution is an index of the process of experimentation in the Dolmabahçe Palace studio where the two men worked between 1865 and 1872.³⁶ Reconnecting these sketches to their related paintings reveals their stages of production and collaborative authorship. The Krakow collection, for example, includes the sultan's preliminary compositional ink sketch (fig. 8) for the Istanbul Military Museum's painting *The Pitched Battle of Mohaç* (fig. 9). The National Museum in Warsaw holds Chlebowski's gridded drawing for this same painting, revealing how he worked to translate the sultan's sketch onto canvas (fig. 10).³⁷

The sultan also made corrections in red ink on top of some of Chlebowski's compositional drawings. These emendations disclose just how intimately the



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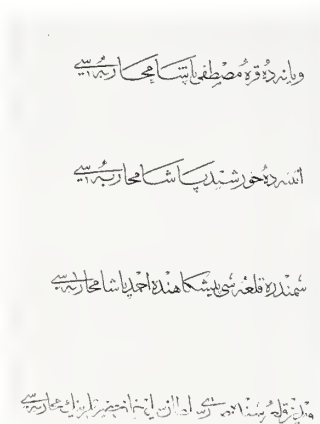
Stanisław Chlebowski and Sultan Abdülaziz, study for *The Mora Rebellion*, ca. 1865–72, pencil and ink on paper, 23 x 34.3 cm, from the Czaykowska album, page 14, National Museum in Krakow. Inv. No. MNK III-r.a-6688.

sultan was supervising his palace painter in the Dolmabahçe Palace studio, and they reveal Abdülaziz's preference for action, expressed through energetic combat and the massing of figures. This is especially evident in his ink markings overlaid on Chlebowski's compositional drawing for *The Mora Rebellion* (fig. 11). They instruct the painter to insert the Ottoman standard behind the two central cavalrymen and to reposition them so they strain further forward and rise out of their saddles more physically engaged in combat. The resulting painting bears out these instructions. Abdülaziz also inserts a *mêlée* of Greek rebels who were either slain on the ground or flee on foot to create a heightened sense of turmoil and strident reprisal. The conventional role of a powerful patron to oversee and arbitrate is augmented here by the sultan's artistic interventions.

Not only did he assert his compositional preferences for the battle series, but he also specified the inclusion of Ottoman inscriptions at the top right of six paintings. Among the cache of ink drawings in Krakow are three pages of text in the same red ink as the sultan's sketches; he likely wrote the text (fig. 12). Four of the inscriptions on these pages match the text on paintings in Istanbul. (The extra two on these pages suggest there may have been plans for eight paintings in total in this format.) It is uncertain who transcribed the inscriptions onto the canvases, but it was clearly not Chlebowski. Each deliberate mark of Ottoman script is the result of many years of disciplined practice. They bespeak the proficiency of a hand that has repeated such strokes and marks over and over under the disciplined guidance of a master calligrapher.³⁸ Their fluency is in marked contrast to Chlebowski's own awkward efforts to sign his name in Ottoman on a page that remains among the artist's papers.³⁹ Including inscriptions at the top right of the paintings created a hybrid visual language that refers to the word and image relationship of the Ottoman miniature tradition and relocates it into the Western mode of easel painting.⁴⁰ Military painting on canvas has few precedents within Ottoman culture. (Portraiture is the genre for most of the pre-nineteenth-century easel painting in the Topkapı Palace collection.)⁴¹ There was, however, a long-standing tradition of representing Ottoman military history in illustrated

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Sultan Abdülaziz, *Ottoman inscriptions for battle paintings*, ink on paper affixed on page 32 of an album of the sultan's sketches, ca. 1865–72, 21.1 x 35.1 cm, National Museum in Krakow. Inv. No. MNK III-r.a-10364.





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13
Stanisław Chlebowski, *Attack on the Fortress of Belgrade at the Time of Sultan Mahmud I*, ca. 1865–72, oil on canvas, 75 x 124.3 cm, National Palaces, Istanbul. Inv. No. 11/1496.

manuscripts, such as the genre of the *ğazânâme* (war account). Abdülaziz's series is a legacy of that tradition.⁴²

Each inscription denotes the represented battle and its main protagonist, thus clarifying and prescribing the Ottoman viewer's interpretation. On Chlebowski's painting (fig. 13), the inscription specifies that this otherwise generic battle scene represents the siege of Belgrade during the reign of Sultan Mahmud I. In 1739 the Ottomans recaptured the Serbian city from the Habsburgs, who had occupied it since 1717. The parapets of the city's fortress are lined with figures in Ottoman costume (including what appears to be a group of veiled women on the farthest left rampart). This indicates the city has already been recaptured, with the Ottoman cavalry below struggling to repel the Habsburg soldiers. This event was one of many battles with the Habsburgs to secure the rule of a city that had first been taken by the Ottomans under Sultan Süleyman in 1521. Capturing Belgrade, the key to the southern defense zone, was a crucial victory in Süleyman's assault on Hungary and the West.⁴³ The green Ottoman standard, the symbol of the sultan as caliph (leader and protector of the Muslim faithful), was carried into the field of combat by cavalymen, as seen on the right in this painting. The presence of the standard invokes the Ottoman tradition of *gaza* (holy war for Islam). The prominence of one of the city's mosques behind Belgrade's fortress walls, as seen on the left in this painting, has symbolic significance in this context as a reminder of the longevity of the Ottoman presence. Belgrade's mosques were visible symbols of the city's contested occupation. Bajrakli (Bayraklı) mosque, the most famous one, was converted into a Roman Catholic church during the Habsburg occupation and was reclaimed after the success of the 1739 Ottoman siege.

The production of this history painting cycle coincided with the new approaches to writing history that Ottoman intellectuals adapted from Western methods.⁴⁴ So, too, the sultan's series of battle paintings adapted the language of Western history painting to represent an historical narrative of the empire's growth and consolidation. This series places particular emphasis on the expansion and defense of the empire's borders in central and southeast Europe. This region was particularly

resonant for the Ottomans in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the southeastern European borders were again being disputed as the Ottoman state strove to prevent territorial losses. Interpreted alongside Fuad Paşa's group portrait commission, these visual representations of historic triumphs on the battlefield are matched by contemporary portraits of an orderly modern military under the reigning sultan's command. This Ottoman visual history thus affirmed contemporary imperial aspirations.

In 1867, the same year as the sultan's European voyage, Chlebowski created an oil study for an historic group portrait of the Ottoman dynasty (fig. 14). Sultan Abdülaziz is depicted in the center of this painting surrounded by his venerable forebears. Drawing on earlier works in the palace collection, this painting incorporates portraits of all of the sultans back to the dynasty's founder, Osman I.⁴⁵ As Günsel Renda notes, this temporally syncretic group portrait format is without precedent in the palace collection.⁴⁶ I would argue, however, that we are now able to establish that within the corpus of works produced for Sultan Abdülaziz, this historic group portrait functions as a hinge between his contemporary painted and photographic portraits and his history painting project. The combined use of text and image within this group portrait demonstrates an affinity between this oil sketch and the historic battle paintings that Chlebowski executed for the sultan. Again the inscriptions have a denotative function, with the foremost sultans named in the lower panel. The inscribed pillars create a spatial and temporal frame for the sultans arranged on the steps of the Sultanahmet mosque. On the right, the inscription marks the year of the dynasty's founding under Osman Han Gazi (son of Ertuğrul), while the text on the left pillar, venerating the reigning Sultan Abdülaziz, registers the year (AH 1283/1866–67 CE) and specifies this as a collective portrait of his ancestors. Consecutive refrains of the *Kalimat at-Tawhid*, the confession of faith, connect the two pillars. The portrait of Abdülaziz is based on what was by this stage a familiar prototype derived initially from his photographic image. More than the iconographic resemblances, however, it demonstrates an impulse to find new ways of articulating the legitimacy of the contemporary Ottoman sultanate through imagery invoking its historical legacy.

Visual Legacies

Produced in a century when diplomacy was as important as combat for the survival of the Ottoman empire, and when diminished Ottoman military capacities necessitated alliances with the superior European power for success in major conflicts, these paintings and photographs played a crucial role in the visual culture of Ottoman diplomacy. Displayed in the sultan's palaces on the Bosphorus, the Ottoman historical narratives were undoubtedly inspirational and salutary for their elite



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Stanislaw Chlebowski, *Ottoman Sultans*, 1867, oil on canvas, 23 x 38.8 cm, Lviv National Art Gallery. Ж-434.

Ottoman audience. And in the context of state visits, they were probably intended to impress upon Abdülaziz's European visitors the cultural sophistication of the reigning sultan as well as the proud historical legacy of the empire on the world stage. The sultan's portrait photographs enabled the broader dissemination of this message about a modernizing sultanate.

Sultan Abdülaziz's energetic efforts at imperial self-fashioning through visual culture came to a dramatic end with his deposition in 1876. The photograph of the abject sultan disrespectfully flanked by two lower ranking palace workers was, as Bahattin Öztuncay argues, in all likelihood produced in the short interval between his deposition on May 30 and his mysterious death on June 4 in 1876.⁴⁷ Although not widely circulated, this humiliating image, which presents such a striking counterpoint to earlier photographs and painted portraits, seems so knowingly targeted by the sultan's political opponents within the palace as to be a form of visual revenge against his earlier efforts at self-aggrandizement through visual culture. Although this photograph unequivocally signaled the end of Abdülaziz's experiments in producing a new regal image of empire through the combined resources of painting and photography, his eventual successor, Sultan Abdülhamid II, approached the project of state-making through visual culture with renewed vigor. The difference between their approaches is partially responsible for the varying fate of the images produced during Abdülaziz's reign.

Indeed, the sultan's sketches and his photographic portraits were the most enduring in popular culture.⁴⁸ The unique sketches remained among Chlebowski's personal effects when he returned to Europe, and selections of them were published in several art journals and travelogues in Poland, England, and the Ottoman empire.⁴⁹ Often reproduced alongside the photograph of Abdülaziz, they were enmeshed within shifting European perceptions of the Ottoman state. In 1914 they returned to the Istanbul art milieu via publication in the recently established art journal *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi*, a crucial organ for the discussion

of contemporary Ottoman painting. In the article that accompanied the sketches, Sultan Abdülaziz was lauded as one of the early artists and enlightened patrons of the Ottoman modern painting movement.⁵⁰ Just as the paintings that created the Ottoman historical narrative had served the politics of Sultan Abdülaziz's modernizing state in the 1860s and 1870s, by the early twentieth century his sketches served a developing narrative of Ottoman and later Turkish modern art.

The most widely circulated images of Sultan Abdülaziz, however, were undoubtedly his official photographic portraits. Ironically, the 1867 Downey photographs were further disseminated because Abdülhamid II eschewed his own photographic portrait. Abdülhamid II took a different approach to the medium, commissioning scenes of his empire and its subjects to create his famous photographic albums in 1893. This ensured the Downey photograph of the young sultan Abdülhamid II, taken in Buckingham Palace when he was there with his uncle, Sultan Abdülaziz, in 1867 and well before he ascended the throne, had greater currency during his reign than it might have otherwise. This unofficial portrait was often reproduced in the European print media when an image was required. A study of the complex range of painted and photographic portraits produced during Sultan Abdülaziz's reign reveals how instrumental visual culture was to both Abdülaziz and his successor's approach to Ottoman statecraft. Despite the differing ways each deployed the medium, Abdülhamid was building on the legacy of his forebear Abdülaziz during whose reign photography was for the first time seen as a resource that could be turned to advantage by the Ottoman state.

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NOTES

- 1 My sincere thanks go to Robert Wellington, Nancy Micklewright, Hollis Clayson, Kate Sanetra-Butler, Ania Merunowicz, Evra Günhan, and Nurullah Şenol. I am grateful to the following curators and institutions: Gülsen Sevinç Kaya, Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul; Colonel Bülent Tütüncüoğlu and İlkey Karatepe, Military Museum, Istanbul; Barbara Ciciora and Aleksandra Krypczyk, National Museum in Krakow; and Tadeusz Majda, National Museum in Warsaw. The research for this essay was supported by the Australian Research Council.
- 2 For Sultan Abdülaziz's drawings, see National Museum in Krakow, Inv. No. III-r.a.6.688 and 6.689 and Inv. No. III-r.a.10.296–10.366. For Chlebowski's sketches for this battle painting series, see National Museum in Warsaw, Inv. No. Rys. Pol. 1966, 7769, and 12998.
- 3 Gülsen Sevinç Kaya, *Milli Saraylar Tablo Koleksiyonu* (Istanbul: TBMM Milli Saraylar Daire Başkanlığı Yayınıdır, 2010), 27–36, and Semra Germaner and Zeynep İnankur, *Constantinople and the Orientalists* (Istanbul: İşbank, 2002), 117–19.
- 4 Şinasi Tekin and Gönül Alpay Tekin, eds., "Imperial Self-Portrait: The Ottoman Empire as Revealed in the Sultan Abdul Hamid II's Photographic Albums: Presented as Gifts to the Library of Congress (1893) and the British Museum (1894)," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12 (1988).
- 5 The literature is extensive. See, for example, Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-century World's Fairs*, Comparative studies on Muslim societies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Ahmet A. Ersoy, "On the Sources of the 'Ottoman Renaissance': Architectural Revival and its Discourse During the Abdülaziz Era (1861–76)" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2000); Ahmet Ersoy, "A Sartorial Tribute to Late Tanzimat Ottomanism: The *Elbise-i 'Osmâniyye* Album," *Muqarnas* 20 (2003): 187–207.
- 6 For an analysis of the fraught pathway to Sultan Abdülaziz's first portrait commission, see Engin Özendes, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Fotoğrafçılık, 1839–1919* [Photography in the Ottoman empire, 1839–1919], 2nd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), 225; Bahattin Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople: Pioneers, Studios and Artists from 19th-Century Istanbul*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Aygaz, 2003), 185; and Mary Roberts, "The Limits of Circumscription," in *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, eds. Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 53–74.
- 7 *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1865, BJ, Przyb.236/21.
- 8 Stanislaw Chlebowski, sketchbook, 1864, Constantinople, Inv. No. Rys. Pol. 13005/1–21.
- 9 The three documents are: Chlebowski's undated handwritten announcement about the exhibition, Przyb.236/17; a newspaper article in the *Journal de Constantinople*, March 29, 1865, Przyb.236/19; and an article in the *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1865, Przyb.236/21, Chlebowski Papers in the Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Krakow.
- 10 *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1865, BJ, Przyb.236/21.
- 11 The named individuals in these portraits include: Said Efendi, p. 13; Saib Bey Efendi, p. 14; Osman Pasha, p. 15; Mahmud Pasha (on the left) Mahmud Pasha (on the right), p. 16; and Halil Pasha, p. 17. A second lineup with seven names is on page eleven of the

- sketchbook. Although a few names, such as Muzafer, Rasim, and Rauf, are legible (Rasim paşa and Rauf Bey, adjutants to the sultan, are listed on the diagram on page 18, but it is not certain if these are the same men), the others are barely legible and cannot be matched to those names mentioned in the three documents.
- 12 Orhan F. Köprülü, "Fuad Paşa, Keçecizâde," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı XIII* (1996): 203.
 - 13 For an account of Fuad Paşa's distinguished career, see "Fuad Paşa, Keçecizâde," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 202–205, and Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, "The Men of the Tanzimat," *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 61–69.
 - 14 The sketch of the elaborate ceremonial horse decoration on page 21 could be a study for the sultan's horse.
 - 15 Chlebowski made a more detailed watercolor and pencil sketch of the topographic location of this group portrait on page 6. Here he painted the sultan's tent in a deep red.
 - 16 The topography of this sketch, with a figure on horseback on the crest of a hill that slopes down to the waterway, accords with this description. *Journal de Constantinople*, March 29, 1865, Przyb.236/19, and *Gazeta Warszawska* 1865, Przyb.236/21.
 - 17 *Tercüman-ı Ahval*, 27 Zilkade 1281 (Sunday, April 23, 1865), no. 633. Quoted in Mustafa Cezar, "The Architectural Decoration of Dolmabahçe and Beylerbeyi Palaces," *National Palaces* 4 (1992): 29.
 - 18 Abdülaziz was particularly committed to modernizing the armed forces by increasing funding and purchasing the latest equipment, including rifles from Prussia and large-caliber cannons from Germany. See Shaw and Shaw, *Reform, Revolution, and Republic*, 86.
 - 19 Alfred de Caston recorded a conversation with Serkis Balyan in his article "Le Grand mouvement architectural dans l'Empire Ottoman," *Revue de Constantinople* 1 (March 7, 1875): 416–18. For an analysis of the sultan's involvement in architectural design, see Ersoy, "On the Sources of the 'Ottoman Renaissance,'" 369–76. For an analysis of ceiling paintings in Istanbul, see Serpil Bağcı, Filiz Çağman, Günsel Renda, and Zeren Tanındı, "From Walls to Canvases," in *Ottoman Painting* (Istanbul: Banks Association of Turkey, 2010), 300–11.
 - 20 The Gate of Felicity (a reference to the sultan's abode in the next courtyard) marked the boundary between the inner and outer palace. For the political resonances of this liminal space and the performative uses of the location by successive sultans, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 88–90.
 - 21 Kostantin Kapıdağlı, *Sultan Selim III in audience*, ca. 1789, Topkapı Palace Museum, Inv. No. 17/163.
 - 22 The Topkapı Palace Museum holds a full-length portrait of Sultan Abdülaziz, 1867 (TSM 17/104) and a bust-length portrait, 1866 (TSM 17/968) by Chlebowski. In Chlebowski's papers is an invoice dated September 1872 from the artist to the palace; it lists a "Portrait of his Majesty the Sultan executed in miniature on ivory for the Grand Vezier, Mahmoud Pasha 200 liras." Rkp.BJ Przyb.236-04/26. (This likely refers to Mahmut Nâdim Paşa, grand vezier from September 8, 1871, to July 31, 1872.) Documents in the Polish archives reveal Chlebowski presented the sultan's miniature portraits to foreign royal houses and heads of state via their embassies in Istanbul. In return he was awarded medals and orders from Spain (1871), Belgium (1872), Germany (1873), and Italy (1874).
 - 23 (London) *Times* (July 20, 1867), 8.
 - 24 In his articles Taner Timur provides a thorough account of the gap between these ideals expressed through such diplomatic rhetoric and the political and economic realities of this visit. See Taner Timur, "Sultan Abdülâziz'in Avrupa Seyahati – I," *Tarih ve Toplum* (November 1984): 42–48, and Taner Timur, "Sultan Abdülâziz'in Avrupa Seyahati–II," *Tarih ve Toplum* (December 1984): 16–25.
 - 25 Salahéddin Bey, *La Turquie à L'Exposition Universelle de 1867* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1867), 144. The Ottoman fine arts section included portraits of Sultan Abdülaziz by Mary Walker and Ahmet Ali Efendi. The Abdullah Frères photograph was used for Maria Chenu's portrait of the sultan, which was published in the exposition's illustrated catalogue *L'Exposition Universelle de 1867 Illustrée Publication Internationale Autorisée par la commission impériale*, ed. M. E. Dentu and M. Pierre Petit, Issue 20 (July 11, 1867), 305.
 - 26 (London) *Times* (July 3, 1867), 9
 - 27 "Sultan's Medal Report Special Reception Committee, Presented 8th December 1870," Corporation of London Records Office, COL/SJ/19/02/009 1867. The Guildhall reception was extensively reported. See *Illustrated London News* (July 20, 1867), 54; *Illustrated London News* (July 27, 1867), 88, 89, and 102 (illustrations); (London) *Times* (July 18, 1867), 12; and (July 19, 1867), 9; and *L'Illustration* (July 27, 1867), 52 (illustration), 54.
 - 28 (London) *Times* (July 13, 1867).

- 29 (London) *Times* (July 17, 1867). The tone is evident in these select refrains from the ode, which was published in full in the London newspaper: "Mighty ruler over nations, none may with his power compare, Day and night his constant study that his people well may fare. ... East and West should join as sisters, side by side their voices raise. Singing on the day of gladness songs of welcome, songs of praise. Then together, all ye nations, cry 'Amen,' as England prays, 'Long may Heav'n, O son of Osman, give thee bright and happy days! ... Now to-day the English people see him do their city grace. Hail to thee, Abd'ool-Aziz! All hail, the son of Osman's race!" Although the British press remarked that the ode was composed for this occasion, Emre Aracı's research has revealed Arditì originally composed this music for Abdülaziz's predecessor, Sultan Abdülmecid, when he worked for the ruler in Istanbul, and it was adapted with new lyrics for the later event in London. Emre Aracı, "Ode to a Sultan," *Cornucopia* (2000): 92. For an account of the Crystal Palace event, see Emre Aracı, "Londra Crystal Palace'ta Abdülaziz Şerefine verilen konser," *Toplumsal tarih* (1998): 29–33. For an analysis of Sultan Abdülaziz's musical interests (that even extended to contributing funds to Wagner's Bayreuth) in relation to the Ottoman sultans' embrace of Western polyphonic classical music across the nineteenth century, see Emre Aracı, "Giuseppe Donizetti Pasha and the polyphonic court music of the Ottoman Empire," *Court Historian* (2002): 135–43.
- 30 This was one of four of the sultan's compositions that were published by the Italian firm F. Lucca. See Aracı, "Ode to a Sultan," 90. For recordings of this, see Emre Aracı, *Osmanlı Sarayı'ndan Avrupa Müziği/European music at the Ottoman Court*, London Academy of Ottoman Court Music (Kalan, 2000). For a recording of Arditì's ode "Inno Turco," see Emre Aracı, *İstanbul'dan Londra'ya 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Koral ve Senfonik Müziği*, Prague Symphony Orchestra and Prague Philharmonic Choir (Kalan, 2005).
- 31 (London) *Times* (July 20, 1867), 5.
- 32 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Press, 2001).
- 33 (London) *Times* (July 24, 1867), 11.
- 34 See Klaus Kreiser, "Public Monuments in Turkey and Egypt, 1840–1916," *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 103–17.
- 35 In the Military Museum's catalogue, İlkey Karatepe notes the stylistic and compositional similarities between their nine unsigned paintings and the two signed by Chlebowski, although the unsigned paintings are listed as "School of Chlebowski." İlkey Karatepe, *Askeri Müze Resim Koleksiyonu* (Istanbul: Askeri Müze ve Kültür Sitesi Komutanlığı, 2011), 332–59. A close study of the sultan's sketches and inscriptions in the Krakow Museum enables me to unequivocally attribute four of them. I do not think, however, the portrait of Abdülaziz in this collection is by the artist, given the lack of proficiency in paint handling and the inaccurate signature "Kleboski" on the work. Comparing it to the sultan's portrait by Chlebowski in the Topkapı Palace collection confirms this.
- 36 The two letters attached to one of the albums of the sultan's drawings certify their authenticity and recount the working process of the sultan and Chlebowski; National Museum in Krakow, Inv. No. III-r.a.10.296–10.366.
- 37 This gridded compositional drawing is spattered with red ink, an intriguing indication of the proximity in which the two were working in the Dolmabahçe Palace studio.
- 38 Under palace patronage, Ottoman calligraphy remained a vibrant art form in the nineteenth century. M. Uğur Derman, *Masterpieces of Ottoman Calligraphy from the Sakıp Sabancı Museum* (Istanbul: Sakıp Sabancı Museum, 2004).
- 39 A page among the Chlebowski papers shows the Polish artist was experimenting with writing "painter Chlebowski" in Ottoman. The awkward hand of the Ottoman inscription at the top of this page contrasts with the fluency of the inscription at the bottom. (It includes a more formal title of "royal painter" evidently written by another hand.) In the middle of this page Chlebowski's title as painter to the sultan is written in French and beneath it in Ottoman that has been transcribed into Latin script. Stanislaw Chlebowski Papers, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Przyb.234-04: 25.
- 40 On the word-image relationship in the art of the book, see David J. Roxburgh, "The Study of Painting and the Arts of the Book," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 1–16, and in Persian painting, see David Roxburgh, "Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting," *Res* 43 (spring 2003): 11–30.
- 41 See *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2000).
- 42 Emine Fetvacı, "In the Image of a Military Ruler," in *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 191–237, and "Images of Wars and Warriors: Illustrated Gazanames," in Bağcı et al., *Ottoman Painting*, 166–77.
- 43 See David Géza and Pál Fodor, "Introduction," *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), xv.

- 44 During the time the sultan was working on his battle series, the most significant of these new accounts was Ahmed Vefik Paşa's Ottoman history school textbook, *Fezleke-i ta'rîhi-i osmanî*. This is an account from the empire's origins through its expansion and decline, concluding with an optimistic perspective on Sultan Abdülaziz's reign. (The conclusion was extended and modified to incorporate Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign in a later reprint of the volume). For an analysis of the shifts in writing Ottoman history in this period, see Christoph K. Neumann, "Bad Times and Better Self: Definitions of Identity and Strategies for Development in Late Ottoman Historiography (1850–1900)," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 57–78, and Ercüment Kuran, "Ottoman Historiography of the Tanzimat Period," in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 422–29. For an analysis of earlier Ottoman approaches to history writing, see the essays by Halil İnalçık and V. L. Ménage in the same book.
- 45 It is likely these oil sketches were created for works for the sultan, but they are not firmly attributed because the finished paintings (if they were ever created) remain unlocated.
- 46 Renda, *Sultan's Portrait*, 522–23, and Funda Berksoy, "Political Rationality and Art during the Reign of Sultan Abdülaziz: Stanislaw Chlebowski's Portrait of 'The Ottoman Sultans,'" paper presented at Middle Eastern Studies Association conference (Washington, D.C., December 1–4, 2011).
- 47 This photograph is reproduced in Bahattin Öztuncay, *Hâtıra-i Uhuvvet. Portre fotoğrafların Cazibesi: 1846–1950* (Istanbul: Aygaz, 2005), 125.
- 48 Fuad Paşa's group portrait commission had a more contingent relationship in its political moment. These portraits of individuals who occupied leading positions of state as well as senior military officers who were swiftly superseded in the rapidly evolving political circumstances of the late Ottoman empire would have quickly lost their political relevance. Given the prominence of Fuad Paşa in these group portraits, they may also have been symbolic of the decades that were defined by the concentration of power in the hands of the Tanzimat statesmen against which the sultan defined his efforts to wrest back power from the bureaucracy.
- 49 The sultan's sketches were published in the following: Annie Brassey, *Sunshine and Storm in the East. Or cruises to Cyprus and Constantinople* (London: Longmans, Green, 1880), 113 (for an analysis of Brassey's travels in the Middle East, see Nancy Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler in the Middle East: The Photography and Travel Writing of Annie Lady Brassey* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Mieczysław Treter, "Rysunki Sultana Abdul-Azisa" 4 (*Lamus*, 1908–1909): 555–63; Michał Pawlikowski, "Studio Talk: Cracow," *Studio* 57 (1913): 162–63; and M. Sami, "Selatinde İncizab-ı Tersim," *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi* 14 (Mart 1, 1330/ March 1, 1914), reprinted in *Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti Gazetesi, 1911–1914*, ed. Yaprak Zihnioglu (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), 185–86. For a full list of the sketches in the Krakow collection, see Selmin Kangal, ed., *War and Peace: Ottoman-Polish Relations in the 15th – 19th Centuries* (Istanbul: Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, 1999), 431–34. For related works by Chlebowski held in Polish collections, see *Orientalizm w malarstwie rysunku i grafice w Polsce w XIX i I. Połowie XX wieku* (Warsaw: National Museum in Warsaw, 2008), 117–33 and 278–87.
- 50 Sami, "Selatinde İncizab-ı Tersim." For an analysis of this journal published by the Society of Ottoman Artists between 1911 and 1914, see Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman Painting: Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 116–19.



ROYAL PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY IN IRAN

Constructions of Masculinity, Representations of Power

Abstract

This essay considers examples of Qajar portrait photography to highlight aesthetic concerns and to elaborate its sociopolitical implications in the context of nineteenth-century Iran. Portrait photography in Qajar Iran was not merely a means of self-expression or an inscription of monarchical and patriarchal order, but it was a powerful tool that enabled and perpetuated patriarchal and monarchical relations of power. Put otherwise, the meaning or significance of the portrait does not solely reside in the image itself but in the uses to which it is put.

ROYAL PORTRAITS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIONS of the ruler, as B. W. Robinson states, have always played a crucial role in monarchical power in Iran.¹ Whether in the form of bas-reliefs during the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, the royal representations of Safavid kings in the illustrated manuscripts of the period, or the more Westernized portrait paintings of Qajar monarchy, Iranian rulers have relied on portraiture to symbolize and consolidate their power. The relationship between visual representation of the ruler and dynastic power, however, found its most distinctive articulation during the reign of Fath Ali Shah of Qajar (reigned 1798–1834). As Leyla Diba points out, during his reign, “images of the ruler, in myriad forms, sizes, and media, played an integral role in the nineteenth-century exercise of power, both at home and abroad.”²

In light of the long-standing relationship between royal portraiture and political power in Iran and its most prominent manifestation during the Qajar monarchy, it is not surprising that with the introduction of photography during the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah (reigned 1848–96), the portrait photograph should become the quintessential representation of monarchical power in Iran. Indeed, at the origin of photography in Iran is the royal portrait photograph, for photography provided Qajar rulers with an efficient and easily reproducible means of showing their autocratic power to their subjects. Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Fath Ali Shah, who had continued the tradition of portrait painting by encouraging and supporting new artists at his court, Nasir al-Din Shah successfully displaced that artistic convention with photographic portraiture as he procured the means and conditions for the development of this new art/technology to consolidate his diminishing power during an era of British and Russian indirect colonialism in Iran.³ The Qajar royalty, and especially Nasir al-Din Shah and his sons Zell al-Sultan, the governor of Isfahan, and Mozafir al-Din Shah, the governor of Tabriz and later his successor, appreciated the camera both in its honorific function as a tool to produce images of themselves and their subjects, and in its repressive function as a means to consolidate and display their dynastic power.

¹ Photographer unknown (possibly Luigi Pesce), Portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah, ca. 1850s. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Charles Wilkinson, 1977.683.22.



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Luigi Montabone, Portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah in the Golestan Palace, ca. 1860s. The Golestan Palace Photographic Archive, Tehran, Iran.

While becoming an amateur photographer himself, Nasir al-Din Shah, for example, employed both foreign and resident photographers as early as the 1850s to create a large archive of his dynastic rule. Unlike his Ottoman counterpart, Sultan Abdul Hamid, who avoided the camera like it was a plague, the Qajar king took advantage of every opportunity to be photographed. In addition to employing foreign photographers, he provided the conditions for training Iranians to take advantage of the new medium, and he actively encouraged the powerful elite to accept photography as a pleasurable pastime and a means of self-documentation. To accomplish his goal of advancing photography in his country, the shah asked Amin al-Dowleh, his prime minister who was then in Europe on a diplomatic mission, to hire a professional photographer who could introduce Iranians to new techniques of photography. Amin al-Dowleh subsequently hired the little-known French photographer Francis Carlhian⁴ and brought him to Iran in 1859. Nasir al-Din Shah's contribution to the development of photography culminated in his establishment of a photographic institute, Akas Khan-e Mobarak-e Homauni (the royal photography studio), in one of the buildings of the Golestan Palace. He had Carlhian and other foreign photographers train two palace attendants, Mirza Husein Ali and Agha Reza Khan, in current methods of photography in order to run this institute of photography.⁵ In addition, after the arrival of Carlhian and on the order of the shah, a new department of photography was created in Dar al-Funun (the polytechnic institute), catering mostly to government business. Nasir al-Din Shah's contri-



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Nasir al-Din Shah, Self Portrait,
ca. 1860. The Golestan Palace
Photographic Archive, Tehran, Iran.

bution to the development of photography also included the publication of several manuals to provide Iranians with technical knowledge about the new medium. The first such manual, *Ketab-e Aks* (Photography book), was written by Mirza Kazem by command of the shah and dates to 1864.⁶

What follows provides examples of Qajar portrait photography to highlight its aesthetic concerns and to elaborate on its sociopolitical implications in the context of nineteenth-century Iran. That the earliest photographers of the Qajar court were either Europeans or local artists trained by Europeans meant the tradition of photographic portraiture in Iran was deeply indebted both aesthetically and stylistically to its European counterpart. Three early photographs of Nasir al-Din Shah—the first by an unknown photographer (possibly Luigi Pesce; fig. 1), the second by Luigi Montabone (fig. 2), and the third by the shah himself (fig. 3)—offer early examples of this aesthetic and stylistic indebtedness. In all three images, what may be called the cult of the individual is underscored compositionally.

In the European tradition of early photography, as Inge Morath and Graham Clarke have suggested, the portrait photograph aimed to represent a verisimilar image of the individual, expressing his or her inner being by engaging in a form of character revelation.⁷ Like European photographic portraits, these images of Nasir al-Din Shah involve “a sense of the inner self declaring its ‘being’ in terms of a single composite image, *sans* history, society, or conflict,” to borrow the words of Clarke.⁸ All three photos depict the shah with a serious and stern look and

wearing European-style royal costumes and headdresses.⁹ In all of the images, he either leans against or stands next to a chair, which, though a technical necessity in early photography due to slow shutter speeds and the long exposure time required to take a picture, nonetheless codifies him within a European frame of reference. His erect posture, slight tilting of the head, and the resting of an arm on his hip recall similar corporal expressions seen in nineteenth-century European photographic portraits. In all of these photographs, the shah stands alone, unaccompanied by court attendants or an entourage, in a setting that bears no resemblance to the opulent and bustling palace he inhabited. Even in the photo he took of himself, with the exception of a highly ornate chair, the nondescript backdrop covers his surroundings and thus decontextualizes him. As a result, these images do not express the communal, conflicted, and socially active culture of the Qajar court in which the shah was inscribed. They instead engage in an “ideology of the charismatic individual or celebrity,” which, as Roger Cardinal has argued, defined the genre of early portrait photography in Europe.¹⁰ What these photographs reveal is the representation of a singular being whose physical appearance and facial expression are meant to convey a sense of his individuality. The seemingly confident posture of the king, the stern and serious gaze, and his elaborate costume and decorated sword align these early portrait photographs of the shah with a European model of portraiture in which the cult of individual celebrity is valorized. The photographs, in sum, represent a generic image of an individual ruler.

These images also seem indebted to another European tradition, namely, amateur photography in mid-nineteenth-century France that was advocated and practiced by such “proselytizers” as Francis Wey, Henri de Lacretelle, and Victor Regnault.¹¹ Wary of the rapid proliferation of photographic portraits by professional studios, which Wey and others saw as detrimental to the artistic possibilities of photography, some mid-nineteenth-century artists such as Regnault engaged in a form of photographic portraiture that avoided the elaborately detailed and explicit images produced by professional studios. They preferred instead to imbue their portraits with psychological depth and subtle aesthetic insights. As Larie Dahlberg points out, Regnault’s images, for example, are marked by a private and intimate approach that is “unceremonious, off hand, and unaffected” and in which “accessories and props ... appear infrequently.”¹² The portraits of the shah recall the amateur photographic portraits taken by Regnault in their minimal uses of accessories and props, as well as their unaffected and improvised execution. The plain and unsophisticated backdrop in the picture that the shah took of himself therefore not only decontextualizes him in relation to his social milieu, but it also re-inscribes the image within European amateur photography of the mid-nineteenth century.

Still, to the extent to which every portrait is “a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity,” as John Tagg explains, the portrait photographs of the shah also underscore the social status of the monarch.¹³ Put another way, the images not only describe the character of an individual, but they also draw attention to the fact that the individual who is being represented is a member of royalty. In all three photographs, for example, the shah wears costumes similar to those of European sovereigns, or he appears in military-style uniforms to project a visibly powerful and kingly image. In addition, Nasir al-Din Shah’s somber and grave look, not to mention the ornate sword and chair, also serve as signifiers of his status as a potentate. In short, all three portraits aim to construct, in a willful and controlled fashion, an image of power.

Perhaps in the context of their function to produce a royal image, the shah considered these portraits inadequate in fully representing his identity as a powerful ruler. The second and third photographs, which appear in personal albums belonging to Nasir al-Din Shah, include his handwritten notes. A comparison of how he describes the photographs in these personal captions speaks to his understanding of these images as inadequate representations of his royal being. With the image he took of himself, he uses a technical term for the photograph. The lower handwritten caption reads, “*In aks-e khodam va khodam dar andaron endakht-e am,*” which translates as, “this is a photograph of me that I took inside the palace.” The more elaborate calligraphic writing above the image, which was supplied perhaps by a court artist, is in an ornate and exaggerated language that identifies the shah as the all-knowing spirit (*roh al-alemin*). The handwritten note below refers to the shah’s wish to underscore his own skill as a photographer and identifies the place where the photograph was taken. In contrast, what is notable about the handwritten note below the other photograph is the king’s word choice in reference to what the image depicts. Instead of describing it as “*aks-e man ast dar emarat-e Tehran,*” which would translate as “this is my photograph at a palace building in Tehran,” he states, “*shakl-e man-ast dar emarat Tehran,*” which can be roughly translated as “this is the appearance or representation of me at the building in Tehran.” Nasir al-Din Shah’s nontechnical choice of *shakl* instead of *aks* to describe the photograph taken by Montabone speaks not only to the evolution of photographic vocabulary during his reign but also to the split between a perception of the image as a realist representation of his being and the recognition that the image is merely an outline or configuration of his being. It is a representation that cannot fully capture the essence of his royal identity. That, as in the other image, he feels compelled to state the location where the photograph was taken further suggests his desire to contextualize the image in terms of his sociopolitical status as a king by referring to the fact that the photograph was taken in his palace. The captions, in short, suggest the

monarch considered the photographic portrait merely represented a fragment of his identity, which meant the image required further explanation and contextualization for it to be comprehended even in the case of a personal album.

In light of this recognition, it is not coincidental that as Nasir al-Din Shah became more actively engaged in producing his photographic portraits as projections of his monarchical power, the portraits more elaborately depicted his regal surroundings and social milieu. A portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah by Antoin Sevruguin (fig. 4), a commercial photographer in late nineteenth-century Iran and an official photographer of the Qajar court, provides a representative example. As in the other photographic portraits, here the monarch wears a regal, long coat and stares confidently into the camera with that familiar serious, stern, and melancholic look. Unlike the earlier amateur portraits, however, this image depicts the king in his opulent Golestan Palace sitting on the Takht-e Tavus (Peacock Throne).¹⁴ The opulent surroundings not only refer to the social identity of the shah as a powerful monarch, but they also historicize his rule by affiliating it with that of Nader Shah-e Afshar. The shah poses by sitting on a replica of the Peacock Throne, the most prominent and nostalgic signifier of Iranian imperial culture, which was brought to Iran by Nader Shah after his conquest of the Mughal empire in 1738. This association with the Peacock Throne is meant to affiliate the Qajar monarch, whose sovereignty was utterly undermined at this historical juncture by the indirect colonialism of Russia and England, with a powerful ruler of the Afshar dynasty and to convey a sense of grandeur and power at a time of political weakness. As such, the photographic portrait does not aim to describe an individual identity or to express his interiority, but instead it serves as an idealized inscription of his dynastic rule.

That this and similar portrait photographs are found in several albums from the period suggests the court widely distributed such images of power, thus demonstrating the attentiveness of the Qajar royalty to the political function of portrait photography as a way to project an image of strength and confidence as well as to consolidate its waning power. Portraits of the shah and his sons, both in larger formats and *cartes de visite*, were not only distributed and collected by dignitaries and local officials as symbols of veneration for and obedience to the Qajar ruler, but they were also displayed in government offices and public buildings and shown at official ceremonies as signifiers of his royal presence when the shah himself could not attend.¹⁵ In this way, royal portrait photographs, beyond their descriptive function, conferred a certain social and political status. As such, the royal portrait photograph, I wish to argue, was not just a representation of power but productive of it.

To the extent to which the photographic portrait in Qajar Iran was encouraged by its productive function in the political ideology of monarchical sovereignty, a more communal or contextualized aesthetic sensibility marked the genre of por-



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Antoin Sevruguin, Nasir al-Din Shah on the Peacock Throne, ca. 1880. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, FSA A.1501

traiture in Iran during the late Qajar era. Although photographic portraits of individual members of royalty did not disappear as indigenous and local artists took a more active role in photographing the Qajar court, most of the royal portraits taken by the court's photographers were either group portraits or images of the shah accompanied by court attendants and servants. In contrast to early portraits of the ruler, the compositions of these images contextualize him within his sociopolitical milieu. Portraits of Nasir al-Din Shah from the Golestan Palace photographic archive provide examples of this shift in Qajar court photography from representations of the individual ruler to a more socially situated portrait of the monarch (figs. 5–8). In each of these images, the shah is centrally located in the middle foreground of the photograph to bring into focus his social and political prominence as the ruler. All of the attendants are located behind him or in the background. They often hold items that are meant to symbolize their subservient status and dutiful service to the shah. In two photographs (figs. 5 and 6), in spite of the fact that the shah is on a hunting trip, he does not demonstrate any cheerfulness or lightheartedness. Instead, he stiffly and sternly glares into the camera, an expression that refers to his piety and power.



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Photographer unknown (most likely Agha Reza Akas Bashi), Nasir al-Din Shah on a hunting expedition, ca. 1880s. The Golestan Palace Photographic Archive, Tehran, Iran.

Two other images (figs. 7 and 8) compositionally draw attention to the royal stature of the shah by completely marginalizing court attendants and officials to the image frame. In these photos, the shah is dressed in his royal costume and sits on what appears to be the only chair available. Note that in the second image (fig. 8) everyone around him either stands up or sits on the ground in a deferential manner. This projects a sense of confidence and fortitude as well as absolute rule. Everything in these images, from the ornate dishes in front of the shah to the radical distance between him and his subjects, distinguishes him as the sole figure of power, indeed as the divine subject of adoration and adulation. As such, these photographs reveal a compositional and stylistic negotiation between a European notion of portrait photography as the trace of an individual and a local Qajar conception of the portrait as a dynastic image. They deploy elements of composition and style associated with European portrait photography to fashion a localized form of portraiture that is attentive to the sociopolitical exigencies of the Qajar court. The empty foreground space before the shah and the blurring of the court attendants and officials in the background or on the margins direct attention to the monarch as a supreme being, perhaps even as the representative of the divine, while it highlights the social character of his dynastic rule.



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Photographer unknown, (left) Nasir al-Din Shah in the Dushan Tapeh Palace, (right) Portrait of Nasir al-Din Shah, ca. 1880s. The Golestan Palace Photographic Archive, Tehran, Iran.

While constructive of monarchical power, the compositionally contextualized character of Iranian portrait photography also brings into focus the patriarchal nature of Qajar society as well as the role of photography in perpetuating patriarchy itself. One of the most striking aspects of Qajar photography is the conspicuous absence of female relatives in group or family portraits. With the exception of two early private albums of Nasir al-Din Shah, in which appear several images he took of his wives and daughters, hardly any photograph of female members of the court exists. Indeed, unlike their Ottoman counterparts, Qajar royalty tended to keep their wives, sisters, and daughters away from the gaze of the camera, even while endeavoring to deploy modern technology to fashion a progressive image of their rule.¹⁶ The absence of women in group portraits cannot simply be explained away as an expression of Islamic piety or a way to safeguard family honor, especially given the currency of eroticized images of courtesans in Qajar Iran. Rather, it must be understood both as expressive of a local form of homosociality that rendered women invisible *and* as constructive of the patriarchal structure of power that confined women to the margins of Qajar society. While Qajar royalty projected an image of modern subjectivity onto their photographic portraits and in their enthusiastic embrace of the leading technology of representation, they nonetheless espoused traditional values as fathers and patriarchs. The massive archive of Qajar portraits of men in contrast to the dearth of portraits of female subjects attests then to the way photography was used to reaffirm traditional gender roles and to perpetuate a patriarchal power structure.

The family portrait of the Qajar prince Etezzad al-Saltaneh (fig. 9) provides a typical example. Symbolically positioned in the center, the prince is seated on a chair and is surrounded by his sons and brothers to highlight his privileged, patriarchal position as the head of the household. His elder sons, perhaps from different wives, and younger brothers stand behind him, while his younger sons, perhaps the children of his youngest and favorite wife, sit next to him. The stark absence of wives, sisters, and daughters in this and similar photographs underscores their marginalized role within the family structure, an absence that also speaks to a homosocial notion of male honor that prevents the public exposure of respectable and virtuous women. In spite of the predominantly Westernized appearance of the sitters, the photograph adopts a traditional view of family, one that points to the prince's



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Photographer unknown, Family
Portrait of Prince Etezzad al-Saltaneh,
ca. 1880s. The Golestan Palace
Photographic Archive, Tehran, Iran.

conscious attempt to use the new medium to represent and reaffirm his own privileged status as the proud father of male children and as the family patriarch. In this type of representation, there is no space for mothers, sisters, and daughters. Their absence is a visible sign of gender segregation. In this sense, portrait photography is not merely an inscription or representation of patriarchy—it is a modern tool to maintain and perpetuate it.

An anecdote I know broadens the implications of this discussion of royal portrait photography in Qajar Iran for the study of the genre itself. On the second day of his 1867 visit to Sabzevar—the city of my birth—Nasir al-Din Shah asked his court photographer, Agha Reza Khan Akas-Bashi, to take a photograph of the Islamic philosopher Haji Mulla Hadi Sabzevari (fig. 10), who happens to be my great-great-uncle. Perhaps the shah wanted to impress the philosopher, who apparently had not yet encountered photography. Upon seeing his own photographic portrait, Haji Mulla Hadi was in awe. In one version, recounted by Hakim al-Mamalek, the philosopher's reaction is described as being utterly astonished or stunned (*kamal-e tahayor*), while in another, told by Etemad al-Saltaneh, he responded with extreme bewilderment (*nahayet-e mota'jeb*).¹⁷ What is noteworthy in this anecdote, and what I have hoped to demonstrate in this essay, is an understanding of royal portrait photography that shifts the focus from viewing it as a representation of power to a consideration of its function in the production of power. What is significant about the photographic practice in this instance is not what the image actually represents, but the fact that it is an exercise of power by the sovereign. The photograph, in other words, is meant as a demonstration of Nasir al-Din Shah's divine power. Like a god, he can produce verisimilar images of his subjects. Little is remarkable about the ghostly image except its instantiation of the power of representation itself.

Portrait photography has traditionally been considered a representation or validation of an individual identity. In more recent years, art historians have drawn attention to the socially encoded nature of such representations. Graham Clarke, for example, has argued that “the portrait's meaning exists within wider codes of



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Agha Reza Akas-Bashi, Haji Mulla
Hadi Sabzevari, 1867. The Golestan
Palace Photographic Archive,
Tehran, Iran.

meaning: of space, of posture, of dress, of marks, of social distinction. In short the portrait's meaning exists within a world of significance which has, in turn, already framed and fixed the individual."¹⁸ This contextualized understanding of portrait photography, while a welcome departure from the traditional perception of the portrait as a trace of a unique personality, nonetheless maintains a semiotic view of the genre that regards it as the reflection of a socially inscribed identity. What I have argued in this essay, however, is a notion of portrait photography that attends to its productive function in the construction and consolidation of power. Portrait photography in Qajar Iran, I suggest, was not merely a means of self-expression or an inscription of monarchical and patriarchal order but rather a powerful tool that enabled and perpetuated patriarchal and monarchical relations of power. As the anecdote of Haji Mulla Hadi Sabzevari's first encounter with photography demonstrates, the meaning or significance of the portrait does not solely reside in the image itself but the uses into which it is put.

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NOTES

- 1 See B. W. Robinson, "Persian Royal Portraiture and the Qajars," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change 1800–1925*, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 291–310.
- 2 Leyla Diba, "Images of Power and the Power of Images: Intention and Response in Early Qajar Painting (1785–1834)," in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785–1925*, ed. Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: Brooklyn Museum of Art in association with I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 31.
- 3 A discussion of what I call "indirect colonialism" of Qajar Iran by Britain and Russia is beyond the scope of this essay; for an elaborate discussion of the topic, see Firuz Kasemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).
- 4 His name is also spelled Carlhiée in different references to him.
- 5 The works of these early photographers appear in many albums in the Golestan Palace Photographic Archive.
- 6 For a more detailed discussion of the shah's role in the dissemination of photography and photographic manuals, see Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour, *Nasir al-Din Shah Akas: Piramoun Tarikh-e Akasi Iran* [Nasir al-Din Shah, the photographer king: On the history of photography in Iran] (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, 2002), 172–73.
- 7 Inge Morath, *Portraits* (New York: Aperture, 1986); Graham Clarke, *The Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101.
- 8 Clarke, *Photograph*, 102.
- 9 It is worth noting that I am not suggesting these European-style dresses were only worn for the purposes of the photographs. Indeed, during the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah, Western-style dresses became increasingly popular among the elite classes, who used them for a broad range of political and social agendas. A discussion of dress reform during this period is beyond the scope of this paper. For an introduction to the dress code of the period, see Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, *An Introduction to Qajar Era Dress* (Rotterdam: Barjesteh Van Wallwijk van Doorn & Company's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 2002).
- 10 Roger Cardinal, "Nadar and the Photographic Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France," in Graham Clarke, ed., *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 6.
- 11 For a discussion of this genre of photography, see Larie Dahlberg, *From Victor Regnault and the Advance of Photography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). I wish to thank Luke Gartlan for bringing the tradition of amateur photography to my attention.
- 12 Dahlberg, *From Victor Regnault*, 90.
- 13 John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 37.
- 14 Although this throne is called the Peacock Throne, it is not the original treasure that Nader Shah of the Afsharid dynasty captured during his conquest of the Mughal empire in 1738. This throne is the so-called Naderi Throne, which was built for Muhammad Shah Qajar in 1836 and was meant to resemble the original Peacock Throne captured by the legendary king.
- 15 For a discussion of how royal images were used in the service of authority and power during the Qajar period by being displayed in government and other public buildings, see Diba, "Images of Power," 30–49.
- 16 In their discussion of the photographic representations of Qajar women, Kadijeh

Mohammadi Nameghi and Carmen Pérez González cite a notice of January 8, 1877, that announces the establishment of the photo studio in Dar al-Funun and states the presence of women is prohibited in the studio. See Kadijeh Mohammadi Nameghi and Carmen Pérez González, "From Sitters to Photographers: Women in Photography from the Qajar Era to the 1930s," *History of Photography* 37, no. 1 (January 2013): 14–31.

- 17 Yahya Zoka, *Tarikh-e Akasi va Akasaan Peeshgaam dar Iran* [The history of photography and pioneer photographers in Iran] (Tehran: Offset Press, 1997), 48–53.
- 18 Clarke, *Portrait in Photography*, 3.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND AFGHAN DIPLOMACY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Abstract

This article explores the role of photography in the spaces between Afghanistan and other nations as globalized visual culture was coalescing in the early twentieth century. Particular attention is given to images that enjoyed transnational currency during a diplomatic tour undertaken by King Amanullah and Queen Soraya for horizon-broadening purposes in 1927 and 1928. Desirous of all things modern, the royal pair embraced the potential of photography to promote their fledgling country and to present themselves on equal footing with other elites. The queen's courageous willingness to be seen publicly, against the grain of Afghan social norms of the time, elicited diverse responses in British and Turkish contexts, revealing the extent to which Orientalist attitudes, modernizing aspirations, and culturally specific notions of propriety overlay the Afghan bid for international recognition. By comparing the captions attached to photographs reproduced in Great Britain, Turkey, and Afghanistan, this paper articulates the stakes of celebrity by image for the Afghan queen.

PHOTOGRAPHY HAS PLAYED a complex, crucial, and ongoing role in global visual culture, simultaneously shrinking distances, broadening horizons, and blurring boundaries of all sorts. The dissemination of photographs across cultural and political divides was especially formative in the case of Afghanistan, which coalesced as a nation-state in the early twentieth century even as photography was being introduced to the region. Indeed, the camera arguably birthed the country, as pictures of people and places catalyzed self-awareness inside the country and simultaneously produced an "image" of Afghanistan for the wider world. This paper is an effort to trace and place some of the processes by which that happened. It is, in effect, a study in proto-globalism.¹

In the nineteenth century, Paris was the hub of refinement² for the elite of many countries. Proliferating exhibitions and museums enabled viewers to assemble around shared values of taste and civility that might otherwise belie political or cultural differences.³ Orientalist painting and the institutions and traditions of the *École des Beaux-Arts* were key points of reference vis-à-vis the sites and acts of transnational representation,⁴ but discrete cultural imaginaries were morphing rapidly and unevenly as the century came to a close. Concomitantly, notions of the familiar and the exotic, the civilized and the savage, emerged, and identities were variously marked sometimes with reference to class, citizenship, and travel experience. By the 1920s, Europe, and especially France, was still a center of cultural gravity for many travelers, but the balance of political powers was shifting, and documentarians typically wielded cameras rather than paintbrushes.

Images arising in and from this *mélange* of perspectives around the turn of the twentieth century have generated a vast discourse, impinging in varying degrees on theories of Orientalism⁵ and encompassing myriad self/other processes that transpire across permeable boundaries and within diverse arenas of power and inequality, among them gender, ethnicity, and class. Such contact zones⁶—whether domestic,⁷ transnational, touristic, colonial, or diasporic—are increasingly recognized as sites of sly resistance, sustained dialogue, and even respectful collaboration.⁸ Particularly complex are those situations in which colonial dynamics and modernizing efforts overlap, wherein localized or individual aspirations catalyze curiosity and receptivity to outside influence, and new modes of expression or behavior are adopted. To appreciate such complexities, previously silenced voices and neglected images are being tapped as critical sources of nuance.⁹

Photography, a globally disseminated but locally inflected technology, often enjoys significant, transformative, and even deterministic power in such circumstances.¹⁰ By virtue of “truth value” and mobility, photographs can document as well as foment change, foster as well as derail understanding, and otherwise complicate hermeneutic processes among people, communities, and cultures. Individuals who may otherwise be separated by time, place, or ideological conviction may convene around widely disseminated or particularly compelling images, thereby constituting entirely new collectivities and destabilizing presumed identities. Along the way, the spaces between self and other may be condensed, altered, or even effectively erased.¹¹ This paper is an effort to consider how photography worked to blur such boundaries and activate the interstices among three nations—Afghanistan, England, and Turkey.

Afghanistan is the starting point from which to track these processes. In the early twentieth century, the country was sufficiently isolated that a Turkish journalist described it as “a geographical area so separated from the world that it is not even within the postal service union ... a forbidden land in the middle of the huge Asian continent, like an unknown island in the middle of the ocean.”¹² Despite this isolation, Afghans made up a discriminating audience of modernity, and in the wake of establishing nationhood in 1919, they revised or transcended prior identities as they envisioned the future for Afghanistan. This paper considers the photographic evidence of such self-fashioning and, in so doing, explores the nexus between public image and Orientalism. It follows King Amanullah and Queen Soraya on a tour that lasted for six months (December 10, 1927, through June 20, 1928) and included stops in India, Egypt, Italy, Germany, France, England, Russia, and Iran.¹³ While the Afghan visit to any one of the destinations might sustain lengthy consideration, the focus here is on just two sites, England and Turkey. The former is indicative

of diplomatic interactions in the colonial arena, while the latter emblemizes a charged relationship with another young nation in the Islamic realm. In both settings, the royal entourage and its hosts enacted and exchanged roles as makers, subjects, purveyors, and viewers of photographs.

Beginning (and ending) in Afghanistan loosely tethers this investigation to a particular place¹⁴ and spotlights a particular “self,” but beyond that, my strategy is forensic and palimpsestic. I section time as though for lab work and consider that slice more than once. My general subject is the story that appeared in two illustrated news publications, one British and the other Turkish. *Illustrated London News* (hereafter *ILN*), a weekly publication, covered the entire tour episodically, while *Resimli Ay* (hereafter *RA*), Turkey’s only monthly magazine, devoted an entire single issue to Afghanistan and the diplomatic entourage. In returning to the same sequence of events to look at them with a tighter analytical focus, and again referring to the same publications, the purpose is not to compare and contrast the publications per se.¹⁵ Rather, the intention is to articulate the informed choices and symbiotic interactions by which the king and queen of Afghanistan crafted and acquired a royal and national image in varying cultural contexts.

On a basic level then, this project encompasses two incarnations of “East” (Afghanistan and Turkey) and one of “West” (England), thereby interpolating familiar binaries into a case study of triadic proto-globalism.¹⁶ On another level, the particular contact zone in question—a diplomatic tour—merits further comment. Such a space is neither geographically specific nor inconsequentially vague. It is ephemeral and yet discrete, dictated by the participants’ itineraries, aspirations, interactions, and sensibilities. It is a morphing site of opportunity and social mobility that impinges on different centers of cultural and political gravity but is not entirely subject to any of them. Ambassadorial personae are, by definition perhaps, wont or required to change. In theory, after all, when in Rome one behaves differently than one does in Cairo—but it is more complex than that. Such a campaign across shifting and modernizing cultural terrains is both image-rich and image-driven. This, then, is a story of visualized self-fashioning, a performance of worldliness in the lingua franca of photography, by the Afghan rulers for themselves and their varied hosts abroad.

The Backstory

At the turn of the twentieth century, neither the Ottoman empire nor the British empire bore any resemblance to the congeries of tribes under the hand of Abdur Rahman, the Iron Amir, that would coalesce as the nation-state of Afghanistan by the 1920s.¹⁷ Nor was Afghanistan, strictly speaking, a colony of Britain. Having

successfully held Britain on the other side of the Durand Line established in 1893,¹⁸ Afghanistan had been a buffer zone rather than a colony. Interaction with other countries was limited and mediated, institutions of centralized governance were nascent, and the commitment to nationalism was tenuous. After Abdur Rahman, Habibullah assumed power as amir of Afghanistan (reigned 1901–19), and the ruling clan began to formalize and modernize the nation, transforming society from the top down starting with Kabul. The changes were diversely manifest in architecture, institutions, and social protocols.

Much of that change was envisioned by one individual, Mahmud Tarzi,¹⁹ whose exiled family was living in Istanbul in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Welcomed back to Kabul by Amir Habibullah, Tarzi was a critical and cosmopolitan conduit of (Young Turk style)²⁰ progressive thinking. *Siraj al Akhbar*,²¹ the illustrated newspaper he sponsored from 1911 to 1918, promulgated pro-Turkish and anti-British political convictions, along with a wide range of industrialization schemes, philosophical arguments, and information about other countries as well as the land and people of Afghanistan. A proponent of pan-Islamic modernism, Tarzi supported secular education and new technologies such as photography.²² His equally progressive daughter, Soraya, actively participated in conversations about reform in Afghanistan, enacting new norms of behavior in the circumscribed environments of the Kabul elite. After she married the future king Amanullah, the monogamous nature of the relationship was openly acknowledged and held up as the new standard for Afghan family life. Going beyond mere role modeling, Amanullah and Soraya also sought to revise the status of women in society through formal legislation (Family Code of 1921) and smaller scale efforts, such as publishing the first women's magazine (*Irshad-i Niswan*) in 1921.²³ Mandating secular primary education and even sending girls to Turkey for higher education was part of this larger campaign.²⁴ Thus, in ways that were congruent with but also contesting Afghan society, Soraya was "speaking up"²⁵ to change the terms of women's experience in her country, and she did so with the full and public support of her husband.

Indeed, it was on just such terms that Amanullah and Soraya envisioned a modern Afghanistan when they embarked on a lengthy diplomatic tour in 1927 and 1928, hoping to learn new things from the more modern West. The king described the trip "not as a voyage of pleasure but one of study and social exploration."²⁶ Amanullah's capacious (and voracious) world view is evident in one of his speeches quoted in the Turkish press:

The huge and old continent of Asia [the cradle of civilizations] which used to be considered as harbouring degenerated ethnic groups and stagnating in



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"Where the King is Spending Easter: Windsor—An Unusual View," *Illustrated London News*, April 27, 1928

economic and political terms is waking up. ... What role will this continent play in the future of mankind? ... Will it really accept to be exploited by the aristocracy and be a toy in political games? ... Will the whole world have to follow Western civilization? No, all of today's civilizations in the world are precious.²⁷

Clearly, though Amanullah was susceptible to and desirous of the trappings of modernity, he was no syncophant of the West. Rather, he proclaimed Asia for Asians, with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan as primary constituents.²⁸ Indeed, a writer from the *New York Times* is quoted in the issue of *Resimli Ay*: "The Algerian Sultan may be a puppet of France, the Egyptian king Fuad, the Iraqi king Faisal are Great Britain's toys, but the Afghan king Amanullah Khan is neither under the influence of Great Britain nor of Soviet Russia."²⁹

From a political perspective then, Afghanistan struck a bold stance in the public eye, and the tour was deemed a success in that it enabled the Afghan rulers to participate in, learn from, and acquire the trappings and materials with which to forge a modern nation. As they crossed political and cultural boundaries, they were regularly applauded for their receptivity, curiosity, and poise, although they periodically faced experiences that must have seemed like odd behavior among bizarre natives—for example, plane crashes at an Italian air show held in their honor³⁰ and welcomes from bewigged and bedecked British dignitaries.³¹ Throughout this process, photography worked to capture, interpret, and disseminate news. When the royal pair returned home in the summer of 1928, they were both inspired by and demoralized about Afghan prospects for modernity.³²

The Afghan Image Abroad

It is important to consider how these Afghan visitors figured in the cultural imaginations of England and Turkey. Headlines in the *Illustrated London News* over the course of the tour, for example, heralded a glittering "modern" present set between the archaeologically recovered past and the technologically assisted future. The ancient urban site of Moenjodaro had just been unearthed in British India,³³ the innermost sanctum of King Tut's tomb had been revealed in Egypt,³⁴ and the Sasanian art of Iran was being trumpeted.³⁵ Regular columns covered the evidence of modernity—"Electricity in Daily Life" and "The Chronicle of the Car"—and further scenarios were imagined: "The House of the Future ... as it may be when Domestic Life is transformed by Electricity and other Scientific Inventions."³⁶ Meanwhile, the view of Windsor Castle from the air seemed to confirm the endless might of the empire (fig. 1).³⁷ Thus, the expanded and excavated past was an ever

more glorious preface to the English present, and the accessible heavens afforded great promise for the mechanized future.

With time and space still opening out under the umbrella of British power, the extensive coverage of the Afghan tour revealed imperial self-absorption. Grand and ritualized gestures of welcome to the royal pair from Afghanistan were well documented. Parades and diverse interactions with British royalty were photographed for public consumption.³⁸ While British coverage acknowledged Afghan sovereignty, it also positioned the king and queen as spectators to and affiliates of imperial power by means of headlines and photographs that document their exposure to the evidence of military power—"King Amanullah viewing the Victory, the restored flagship of Lord Nelson"³⁹; "The Afghan King with the Army and Navy"⁴⁰; "The Fleet as the Afghan King Saw It"⁴¹—historic events and civic accomplishments, and the granting of honorary degrees in their educational institutions ("King Amanullah awarded D.C.L. at Oxford").⁴² Of course, the royal pair assiduously visited sites wherein British modernity was on display ("King Amanullah inspecting water pump and industrial centres"),⁴³ and stops in other European capitals, such as Rome and Paris, were duly noted.

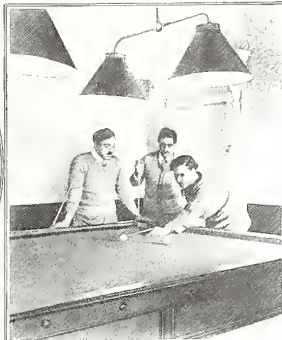
ILN rhetoric surrounding non-European nations is equally revealing. A peculiarly British perspective was evident, for example, in descriptions of the Afghan visit to "Turkey's Modern Capital." Although the city was still under construction, the writer was cavalier and dismissive, noting that new buildings were "erected in a haphazard manner" and the city "strikes even the most lenient as dull and naïf," comparable to an American "gold rush town."⁴⁴ In contrast to such overt condescension, the caption to the photograph of "Two Progressive Asiatic Rulers: King Amanullah of Afghanistan with Mustapha Kemal Pasha, driving to the races during his recent visit to Angora"⁴⁵ is only implicitly patronizing. *ILN*'s coverage of Afghanistan is not dissimilar. Articles include photographs taken in Kabul, supplied with captions and elaborating text in London. In these cases, the accommodating space between verbal and visual often serves as an index of socio-cultural attitudes.⁴⁶ "Western Ways of an Eastern Ruler"⁴⁷ (fig. 2) is an instance in which the caption works to reify differences politely, recognizing familiar and civilized "Western" pastimes that are implicitly incongruous for the "Eastern" ruler.

The June issue of *Resimli Ay*, entirely devoted to Afghanistan and the European tour, strikes a rather different chord from the outset. Amanullah appears on the cover in an honorific mode reminiscent of an equestrian statue (fig. 3) with the laudatory caption, "The Afghans' venerable, young, courageous king Amanullah Khan, who is visiting our country today." Thereafter, much attention is paid to Afghan independence and its significance for the Middle East in general. Afghan-

WESTERN WAYS OF AN EASTERN RULER: THE KING OF AFGHANISTAN.



KING AMANULLAH AT THE SUMMER PALACE AT PAGHMAN. THE KING OF AFGHANISTAN ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IS DUE TO ARRIVE IN ENGLAND IN MARCH.



IN THE BILLIARDS-ROOM AT THE ROYAL PALACE. THE KING OF AFGHANISTAN (LEFT), HIS CHAMBERLAIN (MID.), AND AN OFFICER OF THE COURT.



AT A SHOOTING PARTY. KING AMANULLAH (LEFT) WITH HIS BROTHER, ISLAM, AND A YOUNGER UNCLE (RIGHT).

Thanks to the publicity given to his Majesty the King of Afghanistan's recent journey, it has become general knowledge that King Amanullah is very European in his tastes and in his methods as a ruler. He has been much praised by the British press as a liberal monarch, and it is said that he has a keen eye for the modern position, and that he is the most advanced ruler of the day. Already he has visited the most important cities of the country, and now he is on his way to Europe, and it is expected that he will be able to introduce reforms which will greatly improve the condition of the country.



IN THE GRAND STAND AT A RACE-MEETING AT PAGHMAN. KING AMANULLAH (LEFT), HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY, MR. ZAYI, AND HIS BROTHER ISLAM.

It is further to be noted that the King is very fond of the horse, and he is a keen sportsman. He has been much praised by the British press as a liberal monarch, and it is said that he has a keen eye for the modern position, and that he is the most advanced ruler of the day. Already he has visited the most important cities of the country, and now he is on his way to Europe, and it is expected that he will be able to introduce reforms which will greatly improve the condition of the country.

آرامه شاهی :

نور کدو : سه شنبه ۳۰۰ غروش

آرامه شاهی : ۱۵۰ غروش

خارجی : سه شنبه ۳۰۰ غروش

آرامه شاهی : ۱۵۰ غروش

رسمی

نور کدو : سه شنبه ۳۰۰ غروش

آرامه شاهی :

نور کدو : سه شنبه ۳۰۰ غروش

آرامه شاهی : ۱۵۰ غروش

خارجی : سه شنبه ۳۰۰ غروش

آرامه شاهی : ۱۵۰ غروش



پرو کون مملکت ساری پورانه افغانان قبیله کج و مسعود قزاق امام الله خان هفتباری

2
"Western Ways of an Eastern Ruler,"
Illustrated London News, January 28,
1928

3
Amanullah on cover of *Resimli Ay*,
June 1928

istan's political status vis-à-vis Britain and other European nations is addressed, and the potential, for example, of a transcontinental railway is heralded.⁴⁸ Describing the country and its enterprising ruler in generous terms, the magazine details Afghan efforts to modernize their nation, with sections devoted to geography, governance, architecture, agriculture, intellectual life, and customs and traditions. Coverage includes numerous photographs taken in Afghanistan as well as images of the European tour.

Throughout the issue, political opinions about Amanullah and the emergence of Afghanistan in the international arena are clearly stated: "Afghanistan's active and determined ruler, Amanullah Khan, is a star who is bringing the good news of a grand civilized, economic and national future for the Middle East and the Asian continent."⁴⁹ Particular effort was made to underscore connections between Afghanistan and Turkey—"Afghanistan can be considered a Turkish state: Today Turks make up half of the population of Afghanistan"⁵⁰—and to emphasize a personal intimacy between the Afghan and Turkish rulers in a tone of camaraderie and shared values.⁵¹

The person which the Afghan king Amanullah Khan had chosen as a guide for modernizing the country was the Ghazi [Atatürk]. Amanullah Khan loves Atatürk like his brother and shows him extraordinary respect. He even has pictures of Atatürk in honored places in his palace. At any opportunity he proudly talks about the sword that Atatürk has given him as a present.⁵²

BRITAIN'S ROYAL GUEST FROM AFGHANISTAN AS A SPORTSMAN A SCENE SUGGESTIVE OF A PHARAOH'S HUNTING EXPEDITION.



KING AMANULLAH ON THE FOREMOST ELEPHANT, WITH HIS COURT CHAMBER
WITH THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE PROVINCE OF KANDAHAR

When King Amanullah goes adventuring in Afghanistan he sets forth with a goodly cavalcade, in a style somewhat reminiscent of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt, as represented, for example, in scenes of the chase found in the Tomb of Tutankhamen. The King of Afghanistan is a very busy man, much so with the affairs of his realm but he enjoys spending activities whenever he can find time for them. In a recent characteristic of him by a Frenchman published during his visit to Paris, we read: "The leisure that remains to him from his royal duties King Amanullah divides into two parts, one used

JAGOUR KHAN, BEHIND HIM, AND HIS ELDER BROTHER ON THE SECOND ELEPHANT
ROYAL HUNTING CAVALCADE FORDING A STREAM IN AFGHANISTAN.

making and private study, and the other to sport. M. Zya Houtaystun, a distinguished Perlin, who was a pupil at our Ecole des Beaux-Arts and rendered vital service to French propaganda during the war is charged with the duty of keeping him on course with every intellectual and artistic movement in the West. The remainder of his free time the King devotes to sport. He loves hunting. In autumn and winter he goes duck-shooting in the immediate neighbourhood of Kabul, and there at least three a year he hunts gaards in the mountains. He excels at lawn-tennis and billiards."

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4

“Britain’s Royal Guest from
Afghanistan as a Sportsman,
A Scene Suggestive of a Pharaoh’s
Hunting Expedition,” *Illustrated
London News*, March 10, 1928



5

Resimli Ay, June 1928.

The ideological contrast between the Turkish and British publications is most striking when the same image appears in both publications, albeit with different captions and formats. For example, a photograph of Amanullah hunting in Afghanistan is granted a two-page spread in *ILN* (fig. 4), with a headline that links Afghan behaviors with those of the pharaohs.⁵³ The discursive caption elaborates: “When King Amanullah goes a-hunting in Afghanistan, he sets forth with a goodly cavalcade, in a style somewhat reminiscent of the ancient Pharaohs of Egypt, as represented for example in scenes of the chase found in the tomb of Tutankhamen.” This commentary is rich with topical nuance. Not only would it have derived credence from the recent archaeological discoveries, but it also worked rhetorically to evoke exotic and antiquated extravagance for more “modern” readers. *ILN* audiences, well schooled in the British imperial imaginary, were already primed to associate the hunting of big game with royal pomp and power, but this particular enactment carried the added valence of antiquarian condescension.⁵⁴

The same photograph appears in half-page format in *Resimli Ay* (fig. 5), with a caption noting the king's enjoyment of hunting: "Amanullah Khan is extraordinarily interested in hunting. Here we see the king together with his entourage going hunting." In this rendition, however, the image is juxtaposed with photographs of more sedate pastimes, such as playing tennis and dandling babies. The caption—"Amanullah Khan in Kabul / the king relaxing with his friends after a tennis match"—brings the Afghan monarch close to the reader in familiar and even prosaic ways. Thus, the size, caption, and page layout in *Resimli Ay* contextualizes Afghan hunting in comparative banality, whereas the *ILN* presentation sensationalizes it in Orientalizing terms. If the image itself is universally legible, the rest is determined by context.

THE QUEEN OF AFGHANISTAN AS SEEN IN EUROPE: PARIS STUDIES.



"DARK-HAIRED, YET FAIRER THAN MANY ITALIAN AND SPANISH WOMEN": THE AFGHAN QUEEN.

The Queen of Afghanistan, who after her arrival in Europe has discarded the old and adapted European costume, has impressed the Parisians by her charm and beauty and brilliant presence, while all the women have admired her. A Polish lady, who is especially her neighbor and friend, said: "The Queen of Afghanistan is a beautiful woman, and her presence is a great asset to the world." The King of Afghanistan, who is a soldier, is a soldier, and it is to receive his military education at St. Cyr. His younger boy,

aged six, has accompanied his parents to Europe. The King and Queen are devoted to children, and during their voyage to the "Empire" from India to Egypt, King Amanullah distributed toys to all the children he found. It was during this voyage that the Queen and Princess had appeared unveiled, and joined in society and dress again. She is described as "dark-haired, yet fairer than many Italian and Spanish women." The "Almanach de Gotha" states that King Amanullah married at Kabul in 1919, the daughter of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Emir of Afghanistan and Mirza Feroz Khan of Afghanistan in Paris.

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6

"The Queen of Afghanistan as Seen in Europe: Paris Studies," *Illustrated London News*, February 4, 1928



7

Illustrated London News, March 10, 1928

The Queen in Public

In these (and other) general ways then, news coverage of the Afghan diplomatic tour offers insight into a multicentric and visually mediated arena that encompassed diverse attitudes and behaviors, but a finer point can be put on this argument with reference to images of Queen Soraya. As the Afghan party progressed from India through Europe and Russia and returned home, Queen Soraya evolved in the public eye from a veiled enigma to an enshrined celebrity. This reflected her own choice to perform her royal and ambassadorial roles in "modern" terms and to capitalize on requisite technologies, such as photography. Perhaps not surprisingly, much attention was paid to her face and her clothes during the course of the tour.⁵⁵ By allowing and even embracing this visibility, Soraya effectively advanced her own (Orientalist) exposure, a protracted process that was assiduously documented by the British press. In Bombay, she is veiled and retiring.⁵⁶ By January 14, 1928, Soraya is "unveiled in public for the first time," driving with the Italian crown prince in Rome.⁵⁷ Subsequently, when the party arrives in France, the *ILN* headline reads, "The Queen of Afghanistan as Seen in Europe: Paris Studies" (fig. 6), while the lengthy caption describes her skin tone precisely: "Dark Haired and yet fairer than many Italian and Spanish Women."⁵⁸ By March 10, Queen Soraya is the cover girl, posed like the season's other debutants⁵⁹ (fig. 7), but she is still held at a certain distance as "Our Royal Visitor from Asia." The climax occurs in the issue of March 17, where the "first studio portraits" are unveiled (fig. 8), seemingly a rite of passage that granted definitive access to the realm of the proper elite. The accompanying



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8
"First Studio Portraits of Queen Surya: England's Royal Guest from Afghanistan," *Illustrated London News*, March 17, 1928



9

9
"The British Government's Royal Guests from Afghanistan: King Amanullah and Queen Surayya," *Illustrated London News*, March 24, 1928

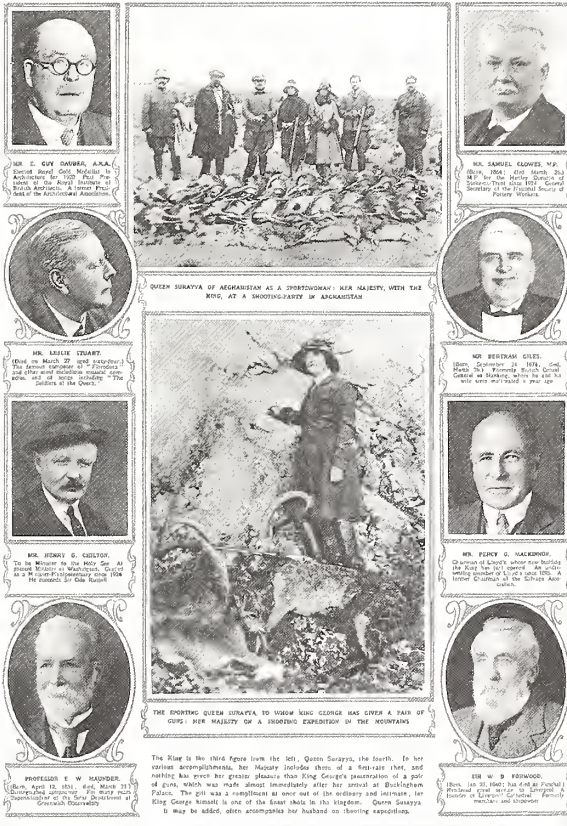
text describes Soraya with particular reference to her monogamous marriage and personal appearance:

The first consort of an oriental monarch to visit Europe with her husband. She is a daughter of an Afghan foreign minister, Tarzi Khan, and is the only wife of the king who firmly upholds the idea of monogamy. She has made an immense impression in Rome, Berlin and Paris by her personal beauty and her adaptability to Western ways ... it is difficult to realize that this charming lady has, according to our standards, been virtually a prisoner all her life. She lived in the strictest seclusion in Kabul. ... In Paris, she was hailed as a queen of fashion and had some fifty dresses made there.

Even more extravagantly, she is described as "rivaling Queen Elizabeth in the splendors of her wardrobe."⁶⁰ Thus exposed, dressed, and launched in civilized society, Soraya appears with the king on the cover of the March 24 issue of *ILN* followed by an article titled "The British Government's Royal Guests" (fig. 9). She is, by this time, a media darling, although it is often her fashion sense and even individual articles of clothing ("her wonderful pearls" and "a fur-trimmed brocade coat that won feminine admiration") that are singled out for comment.⁶¹

It would be wrong, however, to reduce Soraya's accomplishments simply to sartorial panache. That the queen won over British high society is suggested by descriptions of royal hunting activities, a familiar focus of imperial interest.⁶² In

PERSONALITIES OF THE WEEK: PEOPLE IN THE PUBLIC EYE.



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"Personalities of the Week: People in the Public Eye," *Illustrated London News*, March 31, 1928

conjunction with photographs of "The Sporting Queen Soraya" at the hunt, *ILN* notes King George presented her with a pair of pistols, acknowledging that she was "a first rate shot" (fig. 10). The writer goes on to comment that "the gift was a compliment at once out of the ordinary and intimate for King George himself is one of the finest shots in the kingdom."⁶³ Here, the British king and the Afghan queen are presented on a cozy and virtually equal footing, although the wording "out of the ordinary and intimate" betrays, perhaps, a lifted editorial eyebrow. If this gift of guns implied royal parity,⁶⁴ the documentary images worked to legitimize the act as warranted and appropriate. During the course of Soraya's progress from harem to headlines, Orientalism and Occidentalism were complexly entwined, fostering the emergence of a cosmopolitan celebrity; thus, the queen was simultaneously demeaned and enshrined, but along the way, she also became fully conversant in the language of public image.

The Feminist Context

It is neither surprising nor without significance that Soraya's celebrity overlapped with the ongoing revision of the status of women in three very different societies. While scholars have explored at some length the agency of women in and between British and Turkish spheres at this time,⁶⁵ locating Soraya among the headlines of contemporaneous events can bring complementary degrees of nuance to the diverse "feminisms" of the 1920s. The February 11 issue of *Illustrated London News*, for example, provides coverage of a reunion dinner for the militant pioneers of



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Resimli Ay, June 1928.

the British suffrage movement, while the June 23 issue spotlights Amelia Earhart's flight across the Atlantic and the death of Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, celebrated activist and suffragette.⁶⁶

Concurrently, *Resimli Ay*'s reporting of Soraya's visit appears against a somewhat different backdrop of feminist activism. In Turkey, polygamy had been nominally eradicated in 1926, and as scholar Holly Shissler has shown,⁶⁷ other issues of this very magazine had devoted considerable space to prostitution, women's legal rights, and female participation in the labor force in an effort to influence the course of reform in the new republic. In this context, the image of Queen Soraya in evening dress that first appeared in the *Illustrated London News* on March 17 is reproduced with a rather different caption (fig. 11). Here, the picture is framed with questions about her identity and marriage: "Who is King Amanullah Khan and what has he accomplished? Who is Queen Soraya Khanum and how did she get married? The latest pictures of Queen Soraya taken during her trip to Europe."

Even as the Turkish magazine participates in and capitalizes on the visual record of the tour, the rhetoric deviates from the British rendition of this image. The text states that Amanullah was traveling around the world with his wife "uncovered" (*gayr-i mestur*)⁶⁸ and subsequently provides commentary on Afghan marriage customs: "In far away Afghanistan, ... there is no period of friendship, engagement or mutual love preceding marriage ceremonies, because, as in most Eastern countries, the problem of being covered (*tesettur mes'lesi*) makes it practically impossible for young girls and young men to be in one place or to see and like each other. ... To



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Detail, "The World of Women: A Page of Personalities," *Illustrated London News*, June 16, 1928

understand what this means, imagine the general situation in Turkey ten or fifteen years prior to now."⁶⁹ With such analysis, the cultural similarities between the two young republics were acknowledged and celebrated, even as the royal pair also served as a flattering foil for Turkey's own version of modernization.

If Soraya's courageous diplomacy played differently in Great Britain and Turkey, that cosmopolitan stance also fueled her personal celebrity, resonant with the "civilizing" agendas current among the elite in the transnational arena.⁷⁰ A particularly topical issue for forward-thinking audiences in general was women's rights, so the Afghan queen predictably invited comment. This is manifest, for example, in an *ILN* article titled "An Emancipator of Afghan Women" (fig. 12).⁷¹ The caption states: "It is reported that in future no Afghan woman will be married without Queen Souriya's consent, and that no Afghan man will be allowed to take a second wife without the written permission of his first wife, concessions granted to her Majesty by her husband, King Amanullah." With such prompting, English-speaking audiences would applaud Soraya's efforts to guide and protect Afghan women, recognizing her as a respectable and even impressive feminist crusader clad in a fashionable knee-length dress in a tasteful garden setting. This would be encouraging news among a certain class of readers concerned with social change around the globe.

The nude garden statue in the background of the photograph, however, is an ironic (even deliberate?) reminder that audience response to an image must be tracked critically in a multicentric and transnational visuality. When viewed by

yet another audience, this image might have elicited hostile reaction, an Occidentalism of yet another sort, wherein French fashion and vulgar “art” might epitomize the unrestrained sensualities of the West.⁷² Distaste did surface when photographs of Soraya in sleeveless evening dress were circulated in the tribal districts of eastern Afghanistan (some say by British agents). In that setting, such images exacerbated escalating skepticism towards Amanullah and his multipronged campaign of reform. In effect, violated social norms and their visual representation were conflated; resistance to what the image depicted (the overexposed queen) merged with resistance to the medium of revelation (photography). This was complexly destabilizing to local canons of visual propriety.⁷³

Conclusion

Clearly, while images are powerful agents in the public arena, they cannot be summarily reduced to what they picture, nor can they be scripted or assumed to play fixed roles. Even their very licitness can be called into question in some circumstances. Having identified and distinguished divergent readings borne of localized social norms, however, it is also critical to acknowledge the escalating legibility of photographs in the transnational arena. In this case, widely disseminated photographs served as hubs of meaning-making across geographic and cultural distances. Linked together by Soraya’s image, a widening circle of disparate viewers convened and engaged with all that she represented. Thus, photographs of the queen effectively constituted and activated unprecedented spaces of commonality.

Positing the diplomatic tour as a site of nascent globalism has offered a way to assess how visual cultures blur together under the aegis of photography. The material evidence of these overlappings also reflects how individual agency and aspiration undergird and complicate transnational encounters and how images and their morphing captions figure in such processes. In this particular case, the roles that individuals played and the photographs that were involved point to diverse modes of bending boundaries—Tarzi the exile, serving as a conduit for fresh ideas and new options from beyond national borders; Amanullah the diplomat-visionary, moving purposely onto the world stage to fashion Afghan modernity; and Soraya the celebrity, performing her own brand of activism, provoking and then subverting Orientalism and generating, in turn, some revised and even reversed Occidentalsms. Working to change Afghan codes of propriety, she eschewed the veil and won accolades in Europe. Her proud public image later figured diversely in British complacency, Turkish ascendancy, and Afghan resistance. The queen’s agenda and that of her spouse were clear. They sought modernity and negotiated change, conforming to, overriding, and reconfiguring social and cultural norms as needed—

but there were stakes. It was no small choice to participate in a world mediated by photographs. Envoys in their own right, images of the royal couple wandered into transnational terrain without escort; almost inevitably, things got lost (or added) in translation. Such is the nature and power of veristic but untethered pictures, simultaneously underscoring and oversailing cultural boundaries, acquiring and shedding locally resonant meanings en route. Once such agents are set loose, there is no turning back.

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NOTES

- 1 A version of this paper appeared in the online rendition of the conference "Archeologists and Travelers in Ottoman Lands," which was organized by Renata Holod and Robert Ousterhout at the University of Pennsylvania in 2010. The associated publication includes ancillary materials: see Renata Holod and Robert Ousterhout, eds., *Osman Hamdi Bey and the Americans* (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2011).
- 2 The unique status France enjoyed was the subject of a symposium "Is Paris Still the Capital of the Nineteenth Century?" which was organized by Hollis Clayson and Andre Dombrowski and held at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (October 30–31, 2009). For a telling case study, see Emine Fetvacı, "Osman Hamdi Bey," in Holod and Ousterhout, eds., *Osman Hamdi Bey*, 118–38.
- 3 The terms of engagement across cultural boundaries in the context of exhibitions and world's fairs are the focus of important studies, including Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Hants and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 442–61; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney, "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles," *Assemblage* 13 (December 1990): 35–60.
- 4 See, for example, Scott C. Allan et al., *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Paris: Skira Press, 2010) and Peter Benson Miller, "Gérôme and Ethnographic Realism at the Salon of 1857," in Scott Allen and Mary Morton, eds., *Reconsidering Gérôme* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 106–18.
- 5 Studies of visualized Orientalism are centered, although not exclusively, on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and on the Islamic "Orient," a debate ignited long ago by Linda Nochlin's response to Edward Said. This discourse is extensive, multifaceted, and self-reflexive at this point, including efforts to characterize particular strains or sites of Orientalism. See Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains, British and French Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Semra Germaner and Zeynep Inankur, *Orientalism and Turkey* (Istanbul: Turkish Cultural Service Foundation, 1999); Nicholas Tromans, ed., *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); and Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). A few benchmarks pertinent to this project are Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2002); Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts, eds., *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Ian Almond, *The New Orientalists* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007); and Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," in Brian T. Edwards and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, eds., *Globalizing American Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 283–99. "Occidentalism" has not enjoyed comparable currency, although it has been deployed across disciplines; see James Carrier, ed.,

- Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1995) and Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); cultural encounters that might be termed Occidentalism are covered in Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit, eds., *Islamic Art in the 19th Century: Tradition, Innovation, and Eclecticism* (London: Brill, 2005), 1–18.
- 6 The term is that of Mary Louise Pratt; see Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 91 (New York: MLA, 1991), 33–40.
 - 7 See Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 1–28.
 - 8 Mary Roberts’ study of Gérôme’s sustained engagement with the Ottoman sphere is indicative of the scholarly trajectory. See Mary Roberts, “Gérôme in Istanbul,” in Scott Allen and Mary Morton, eds., *Reconsidering Gérôme* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 119–34. See also Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2007) and Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Çelik’s various considerations of “speaking back” are critical. See Zeynep Çelik, “Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse at the World’s Columbian Exposition,” in Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 77–89. See also Fatema Mernissi, “Seduced by ‘Samar’ or How British Orientalist Painters Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Darkness,” in Tromans, *Lure of the East*, 33–40.
 - 9 The cumulative study of North Africa as a site of diverse Orientalisms is a case in point. See Roger Benjamin, *Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997); Roger Benjamin, *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); and Roger Benjamin, “Monochromy, Photography, and ‘Oriental’ Color: Kandinsky, Munter, and Klee in Tunisia,” lecture, Clark Art Institute, October 30, 2012.
 - 10 Bibliography on photography in the Middle East and India is extensive; works that specifically explore photography, Orientalism, and localized modernities are fewer. Useful points of reference are Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, eds., *Photography’s Other Histories* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Nancy Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler in the Middle East: The Photography and Travel Writing of Annie Lady Brassey* (London: Ashgate, 2003); Nancy Micklewright, “Harem/House/Set: Domestic Interiors in Photography from the Late Ottoman World,” in Marilyn Booth, ed., *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Eleanor M. Hight and Gary Sampson, eds., *Colonist Photography* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); and Frederick Bohrer, ed., *Sevruguin and the Persian Image: Photographs of Iran, 1870–1930* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1999). On Afghanistan in particular, see Holly Edwards, “Unruly Images: Photography in and of Afghanistan,” *Artibus Asiae* 66, no. 2 (2006): 111–36. Thomas Walther and Brigitte Schenk, *Focus Orient: Orientalist Photography from the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (U.A.E.: Sharjah Museums, 2008), is emblematic of growing interest in Orientalist photography in the subject regions.
 - 11 Regarding the relationship between the archives and the nation-state, see Ewa Manikowska, “Building the Cultural Heritage of a Nation,” in Costanza Caraffa, ed., *Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011), 279–88. On these issues as they transpire in consumer culture, see Holly Edwards, “Cover to Cover: The Life Cycle of an Image in Contemporary Visual Culture,” in *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain*, ed. Mark Reinhardt, Holly Edwards, and Erina Duganne (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 75–92. On the convening power of photography, see Holly Edwards, “Pain in Public,” in Maria Pia Di Bella and James Elkins, eds., *Representations of Pain in Art and Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 88–102.
 - 12 Resimli Ay, June 1928, 9. I would like to thank Andraś Riedlmayer for alerting me to this publication and facilitating access to it in so many ways. I would also like to thank Helga Anetshofer-Karateke for her translation.
 - 13 The trip was reconstructed by Rhea Talley Stewart on the basis of documents in the India Office Library. See Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan 1914–1929: Faith, Hope, and the British Empire* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 323–68.
 - 14 On notions of “place,” see Joan M. Schwartz and James Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).
 - 15 These publications were qualitatively distinct. Their frequency of publication and production values differ; moreover, whereas *ILN* addressed a general audience and emphasized weekly news,

- RA was a popular magazine directed initially, although not exclusively, toward women. They were not dissimilar in other ways: both present lengthy discursive articles on substantive topics and full-page advertisements of consumer products. Both also print numerous photographs, some of which derive from other sources. See Holly Shissler, "If You Ask Me": Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 2 (2007): 1–30; Holly Shissler, "Womanhood is Not for Sale: Sabiha Zekeriya Serrtel Against Prostitution and for Women's Employment," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008): 12–30; and Christopher Hibbert, *The Illustrated London News* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1975).
- 16 Çelik's use of the term "triangulation" is germane. See Zeynep Çelik, "Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse," in Beaulieu and Roberts, *Orientalism's Interlocutors*, 21. Obviously, many scholars go beyond East-West dichotomies, especially in the realm of diaspora studies and multiple "modernisms." See David O'Brien and David Prochaska, *Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists* (Champaign, IL: Krannert Art Museum, 2004) and Fereshta Daftari, *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006).
- 17 For a general overview of this era, see Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919–1929* (Ithaca and London, 1973); and Senzil K. Nawid, *Religious Response to Social Change in Afghanistan 1919–29* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999). For an introduction to photography in Afghanistan and an image of Abdur Rahman, see Edwards, "Unruly Places," fig. 1.
- 18 For an image of the border post between British India and Afghanistan, see Jeffrey Spurr, "Glimpses of an Eclipsed Heritage: Photography of Afghanistan in the Collections of the Fine Arts Library at Harvard," *Visual Resources* 21, no. 1 (2005): 55–72, fig. 4.
- 19 Vartan Gregorian, "Mahmud Tarzi and Saraj-ol-Akhbar: Ideology of Nationalism and Modernization in Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967): 345–68; and Nawid, *Religious Response*, 45–49. For portraits, see Edwards, "Unruly Images," figs. 7 and 8.
- 20 On "Young Turks," see M. Sukru Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Erik Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010).
- 21 Ursula Sims-Williams, "The Afghan Newspaper Siraj-al-Akhbar," *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 2 (1980): 118–22, n. 16.
- 22 Nawid, *Religious Response*, 45ff; and Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 176.
- 23 Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 243.
- 24 On educational and other reforms, see Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 239–44; for images, see Edwards, "Unruly Images," figs. 10 and 13.
- 25 "Speaking back" is Çelik's incisive phrase to describe myriad responses to colonials and canons; see n. 8 above. My tweaking is meant to underscore the enterprising independence of a woman operating in a context in which indigenous social protocols and gender roles were more deterministic than colonial force fields.
- 26 Quoted in Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 256.
- 27 RA, June 1928, 6.
- 28 Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 177.
- 29 RA, June 1928, 8.
- 30 ILN, January 21, 99.
- 31 ILN, March 17, cover.
- 32 For an overview of the tour's events and benefits, see Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 256–58.
- 33 ILN, January 7, 14–15.
- 34 ILN, February 4, 162–67.
- 35 ILN, February 11, 204–205.
- 36 ILN, February 18, 258.
- 37 ILN, April 7, 593.
- 38 ILN, March 17, 420–21.
- 39 ILN, March 19, 429.
- 40 ILN, March 24, 488–89.
- 41 ILN, April 14, 617.
- 42 ILN, March 23, 536.
- 43 ILN, April 7, 582, 592.
- 44 ILN, June 16, 1114.
- 45 ILN, June 16, 1114.
- 46 On the role of the caption as a limiting directive, see Edwards, "Cover to Cover"; see also Robert Hariman and John Lewis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), esp. 1–24.
- 47 ILN, January 28, 147.
- 48 RA, June 1928, 8.
- 49 RA, June 1928, 7.
- 50 RA, June 1928, 33.
- 51 Amanullah also received an album of photographs of the campaign to modernize Ankara, an effort that would have resonated with the ongoing work to enhance the Afghan capital of Kabul. In this case, images were diplomatic currency, documenting and specifying common goals and affirming mutual and collegial respect. See Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 258.
- 52 RA, June 1928, 6.

- 53 *ILN*, March 10, 394–95.
- 54 See James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 99–139.
- 55 My thinking on issues of dress in cross-cultural contexts has been enriched by the work of Mary Roberts and Reina Lewis. See especially Mary Roberts, “Cultural Crossings: Sartorial Adventures, Satiric Narratives, and the Question of Indigenous Agency in Nineteenth Century Europe and the Near East,” in Hackforth-Jones and Roberts, *Edges of Empire*, 70–94; Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders*, 92–106; and Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, 206–51.
- 56 *ILN*, January 7, 23.
- 57 *ILN*, January 14, 63.
- 58 *ILN*, February 4, 169.
- 59 A full-page spread of the season’s debutantes appears in the same issue. There is further coverage on April 21, p. 696, where it is stated, “The 1928 debutante does not conform to any one type, but appears in unprecedented variety.”
- 60 *ILN*, March 17, 423.
- 61 *ILN*, March 24, 468–69.
- 62 As noted above, the hunt was an important site of imperial imagery more generally. See Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 99–139.
- 63 *ILN*, March 31, 542.
- 64 This royal welcome can be related to the status-conscious behaviors described in David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 65 See especially the work of Roberts and Lewis itemized in n. 8.
- 66 The editorial intonation of some captions is worth pondering on a case-by-case basis. In a photograph published on June 2, for example, under the headline “Women in the News,” Soraya is considerably less prominent than the men she accompanies, Amanullah and Atatürk. The caption is entirely given over to facts about the new Turkish republic.
- 67 Shissler, “If You Ask Me”; Shissler, “Womanhood is Not for Sale.” For a photograph of Mustapha Kemal Pasha with the representatives of the “Union of Turkish Women,” see Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, esp. 115–25, fig. 14.
- 68 *RA*, June 1928, 7.
- 69 *RA*, June 1928, 26. I am grateful to Helga Anetshofer-Karateke for translating and explaining these passages.
- 70 Cf. conclusions that Hackforth-Jones and Roberts reach in *Edges of Empire*, 17–18.
- 71 *ILN*, June 16, 1122.
- 72 Representations of European women in Iran offer an interesting comparison. See Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 54–76.
- 73 For more on this episode and pertinent sources, see Nawid, *Religious Response*, 153–68; and Edwards, “Unruly Images,” 135–36.



PRESENTING THE SELF

Pictorial and Photographic Discourses in Nineteenth-century Dutch Indies and Siam

Abstract

In nineteenth-century Asia, photographic portraits did not exist as a separate visual discourse from painted portraiture. They were frequently introduced as a mark of mastery over new types of visual representation and over the kinds of social exchange in which portraits were circulated, including oil portraits and those in graphic reproductions. This new visual discourse of portraiture penetrated aristocratic society first, but it soon spread to the recently rich and often to the professional middle classes. Portraits were more than just indexical links to the subject—they were images that presented the sitter in a symbolic space frequently governed by both political intentions and institutional learning about developments in public representation.

The Impact of Prephotographic Visual Discourses

How did portraiture in oils and sometimes in modified forms of premodern customary media affect the practice and the subject types of photographic representation in nineteenth-century Asia? This paper looks at some relations between painting and photography during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Dutch Indies and Siam.¹ The emphasis here is on where photography intersects and interacts with other visual discourses, and it does not privilege photography or its theory as such.

In Java, understanding of the pictorial precursors of academy oil painting is affected by the loss of many drawings and other visual records that resulted when the ship carrying the artifacts of Sir Thomas Raffles burned in 1824. Materials nevertheless survive that indicate Javanese artists practiced outline drawing of animal figures by the early nineteenth century. Some habitual portrayal of important persons was also communicated via the portraits of Dutch governors-general and important merchants, and at least one representation is known of the important Javanese prince Diponegoro (fig. 1).

Distant links to European portraiture are evident through the circa 1830 work of an unknown Indonesian artist, possibly Madurese, of *Five Standing High Officials*, possibly from a standing screen that was once in place between a *pendopo* (a type of Javanese pavilion) and private quarters (fig. 2). This may be compared with the Anglo-Indian work given to Faiz Ali Khan, *Four Drawings of Inhabitants of old Delhi, Group of Dancing Girls and Musicians* (fig. 3).² Thus, perhaps surprisingly, one antecedent for Javanese aristocratic portraiture of the nineteenth century in the prehistory to photography may well be Anglo-Indian painting of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

A far more concrete and present linkage between photography and painting is seen in the work of the Javanese minor aristocrat and professional painter Raden



1
Unknown artist from Yogyakarta kraton, *Panegeran Dipanagara* (1785–1855), unknown media, ca. 1807, photographed by Peter Carey in 1972. The image was passed down by the descendants of Diponegoro (also written as Dinpanegara), among whom special thanks for its present use is extended to Ki Roni Sodewo.

2 (FACING)
Unknown Javanese artist, *Five Standing High Officials* (detail), ca. 1820–70, oil and gold paint on paper, five panels, each 196.8 x 74.3 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



4



5



3

Faiz Ali Khan, *Four Drawings of Inhabitants of old Delhi, Group of Dancing Girls and Musicians* (detail), ca. 1815, gouache, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.70-1977.

4

Attributed to Isidore van Kinsbergen, *Raden Saleh*, possibly 1865. Courtesy of KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden.

5

Raden Saleh, *Family of Jean-Chrétien Baud*, 1832, oil on canvas, 105 x 125 cm, Courtesy Dr. Michiel Baud and KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden.

Saleh (circa 1811–1880). He was photographed before 1880, possibly by Isidore van Kinsbergen (1821–1905) (fig. 4) or by Simon Willem Camerik.³ Saleh appears as a Javanese aristocrat who has been successfully assimilated into official service. These Dutch photographers were said to have taught the Indonesian photographer Kassian Cephas (1845–1911). Cephas could well have met Saleh in Yogyakarta in the 1860s.

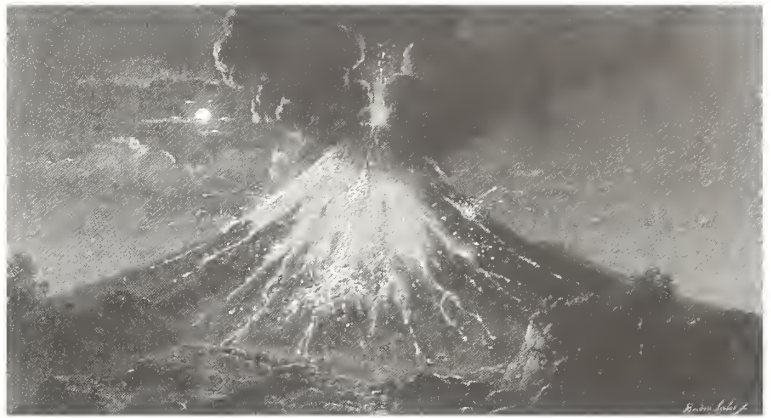
The erect, courtly, bemedalled Javanese painter in the king's service is then not without his pictorial antecedents. How does prephotographic painting practice before the absorption of photography appear in the work of this early colonial, aristocratic artist? Surprisingly perhaps, Saleh is almost the first Asian artist to exhibit his work at a European salon, which he did in the Netherlands in 1834 and in Paris in 1846.⁴ Saleh started his formal painting in Holland in the studios of two Dutch artists in the 1830s. An early group portrait by him in 1832 shows the family of his patron Jean-Chrétien Baud (fig. 5). Even before Saleh moved to Europe in 1829, he had already started an apprenticeship in natural history drawing (1820–22) with Antoine Payen (1792–1852). Payen was the main artist in the Reinwardt Commission for Natural History of the Netherlands' Indies. He made other visits with Saleh to the Moluccas in 1824 and Yogyakarta in 1826.⁵ On his return to that part of the Dutch Provinces, which shortly afterwards became Belgium, Payen in the 1830s worked up his sketches into academy paintings that were presented to the Dutch king. These show low horizons and atmospheric local tonalities associated with naturalistic descriptive painting. They were followed by Saleh in some works. Saleh even learned from Payen's oil sketches of volcanoes done from nature (1819–22; fig. 6). This naturalism is applied in Saleh's own later depiction of Mount Merapi in actual eruption in 1865 (fig. 7), after his nearly twenty-two years in Europe (1829–51).⁶

This part of the history of pictorial discourse in Java thus indicates that by the 1820s some artists were already acquainted with the details of a kind of natural lighting for painted subjects that later became habitual with the camera. From the 1870s, when Saleh and other artists were fully formed individuals and



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6
Antoine Payen, *Outdoor Sketch of a Volcano*, presumed 1819–22, oil sketch on canvas, RMV60-3, Ethnology Museum, Leiden.



7

7
Raden Saleh, *Eruption of Merapi (Observed by night)*, 1865, oil on canvas, 75 x 117 cm, Museum Naturalis, Leiden.

displayed themselves in photographs, the effects of which they were evidently very conscious, they still were the inheritors of representational visual discourses that had quite widespread local and inter-Asian sources. I have seen no direct mention of Saleh working with photography, but he can scarcely have been ignorant of its advent and its techniques. He lived in Paris on and off from 1845 to 1850, when photography was becoming part of artistic practice. He knew people who were familiar with the implications of the new medium, such as the then-unknown poet Charles Baudelaire, who in 1845 visited Saleh's studio with Louis Auguste Dozon, a young linguist of Malay. Only two years later, in 1847, Baudelaire was portrayed by Gustave Courbet, a painter who by that time used photographs in his work. Baudelaire himself was photographed by Nadar later around 1854. The painter Horace Vernet (1789–1863), whose studio Saleh visited in November 1845, had used daguerreotypes since November 1839 in a series of paintings of Middle East monuments.⁷

If we look at portraits painted by Saleh, and at portraits of him by others, the indebtedness of photographic representation to manners current in painted portraiture at the time it was invented becomes clear, despite the rigidity of pose necessitated by long exposure times. In Saleh's 1836 portrait of his patron Jean-Christien Baud (fig. 8), a residual eighteenth-century naturalism inflected by neoclassicism is evident, but by 1857, the time of Raden Saleh's portrait of a Javanese aristocratic woman, the subject is already inhabiting a space informed by photographic lighting, and the painting was inferably made after a photograph or at least used one as an additional pictorial reference given the way the head seems to have been slotted into the rest of the figure (fig. 9). I am not sure if there is an earlier 1850s' Javanese portrait based on a photograph like that in India,⁸ where such commemorative portraiture was already defined by photographic conventions and styles even in the 1850s.

In addition, the cultural position of the artist himself cannot be ignored. Saleh by turns provided different self- and other-images of his persona, most likely in self-awareness of his own culturally hybrid situation, thereby individuating himself in two domains at once. Portraits of Raden Saleh exist in which he appears as the artist dandy (fig. 10), but in others he presents himself as the romanticized Asian prince (fig. 11). This contrast was noticed in a contemporary record of 1845 by an English visitor to the court of Coburg, where Saleh was staying. Lady Charlotte Canning, wife of the later first viceroy of India, was taken aback at Saleh's presence.



8

8
Raden Saleh, *Jean-Christien Baud*
(1789–1859, Governor General of
Dutch Indies, 1833–37), 1836, oil on
canvas, 119.5 x 97 cm, Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam.



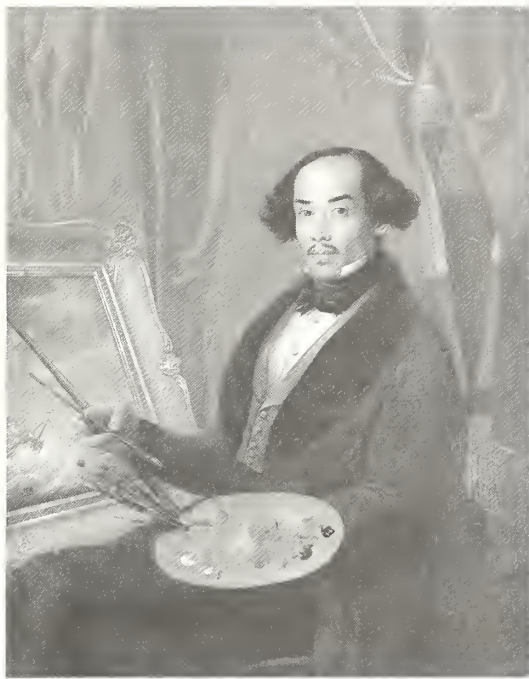
9

9
Raden Saleh, *RA Muningsasari*
[Younger sister of Ronggowarsito, a
philosopher and poet], 1857, oil on
canvas, 120 x 80.2 cm, Dr. Oei Hong
Dian Collection, Magelang.

In the Gd. Duke of Baden's room I saw one of the works of Java Prince Ali who lives at Coburg like a tame monkey about the house. Ld Aberdeen was so taken aback the first day to see this black in his Turkish dress instead of handing us coffee, quietly take some to drink himself. When others are not in uniform he sheds his turban & gold & silver & becomes a regular German Dandy with most Prussian manners He has studied painting with great care & his picture of the Duke and Dss of Coburg with their real black servant & heaps of dead game is a good imitation of Landseer.⁹

In Saleh's later photograph portrait of or before 1872 by Woodbury and Page (fig. 12), he shows that he is perfectly at ease between the two images, and if we compare this photograph with his own portrait from 1836 by his patron Baud, curiously Saleh seems to have self-consciously fitted himself into the body image of his earlier sitter.

This fit could be where pictorial convention and indexical photographic self-representation have coincided in an order that was also the counterpart of the sitter's physical body language in the world. Individuation through photographic representation begins almost at the inception of the relation between photography and painting, at least in the context of the Dutch Indies. Given the complexity of the visual discursive sources, and of Saleh's placement within them, individuation of the portrayed subject can well be seen as one inception of the Asian modern. The pictorial discourse, however, probably cannot be interpreted as a full counter-appropriation of the image styles of the portraits of Dutch colonial officials or of the representations of the Javanese and European aristocrats among whom Saleh moved over a quite long and eventful life. If there is a hint of a knowing, dandy-like play in Saleh's smile (see fig. 12), it may be just to present an occasion for an interrogative tweaking of Dutch perceptions of him. In a colonized context, aristocratic irony through the multiple discursive guises worn by the portrayed subject is a nascent form for autochthonous subversion of the colonial order.



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Attributed to Johan Christian Albrecht Schreul (1773–1853), *Portrait of Raden Saleh*, 1840, oil on canvas, 106.7 x 85.3 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



11

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Johan Karl Bähr (1801–1869), *Portrait of the Painter Prince Raden Saleh*, 1841, oil on canvas, 86.5 x 71.7 cm, Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga.



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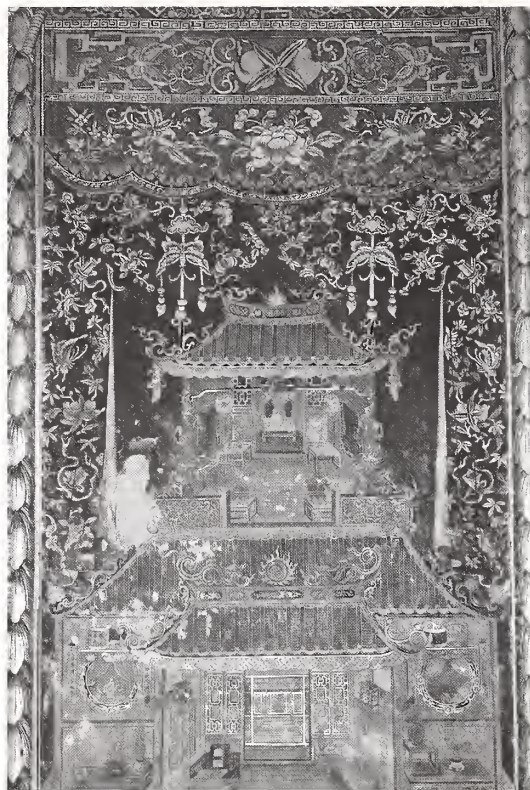
Woodbury and Page, *Raden Saleh*, before 1872, 24.5 x 19 cm, albumen print, Courtesy of KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden.

Reformulating the Image of the Ruler by and for the State

The prephotographic visual discourse in Siam does not present any notable portraits, but the habitually accepted absence of early portraiture before King Mongkut (Rama IV, reigned 1851–68) in Siam in the 1850s can be queried. The prehistory is of two kinds: existing mural paintings and the later use of portrait imagery, which indicates an earlier and probably publicly tabooed series of royal ancestor images that do not survive and for whose existence there is no direct evidence.

In Bangkok, experiments with perspective definitely took place at Wat Rachaorot in the 1830s (fig. 13). They indicate a new interest in mimetic realism, and this partially extends to representations of figures in some murals. These changes seem to have begun with the importation of mirrors by the Portuguese ambassador in 1818, followed by an order for them by Rama II (reigned 1809–24). Several changes in visual discourses happened all at once in the 1820s and 1830s. At Wat Rachaorot, the use of mirrors or symmetrical mirror reflections produces a kind of doubled image that is rather akin to one-point perspective. Portraits from life began to be made of famous lay people and some monks, and the notion of a portrait sent as an index of a person appears in contemporary literature. The visualization of the common people changes from elegant visual stereotypes at Wat Pho to quasi-realistic and individuated people in views of street activities in Wat Suthat.¹⁰

By the 1870s in the Chakri Throne Hall project in Bangkok, sculpted images of earlier kings were collected in what is a royal pantheon of the Chakri dynasty. One wonders where notions of the physical appearance of the first three Chakri kings originated, as used in the portrait sculptures attributed to Prince Praditthavorakarn in 1871–72 (fig. 14). The received court explanation is that the image of the king was hitherto tabooed. The four people still alive who had actually seen King Phra Phutthayotfa the Great (Rama I, reigned 1789–1801) were consulted. Variations among the designs were made until these four agreed that the representation was close. This consultation could only have been of marginal



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Anonymous Siamese artist, *Mural at Wat Ratchaorot*, ca. 1830s, mural painting, Thonburi, Bangkok. Courtesy Panupong Lahasom.



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Prince Praditthavorakarn, *King Phra Phutthayotfa the Great* (Rama I), 1871, gilded bronze, H. 172 cm, Phra Tephidorn Hall, Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok, Thailand. From Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), pl. 29.1, p. 28. Courtesy of Professor Poshyananda and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.

reference, I suggest, unless there had also been a scroll of king portraits or possibly representations of kings in the guise of Hindu deities.¹¹ Sketches could have been done by a painter in the 1830s, possibly an itinerant Chinese who referred to surviving drafts left by earlier artists. It is significant that probably in the early 1860s, both King Mongkut and his crown prince, the future king Chulalongkorn, had portraits painted in the Chinese official manner. These were highly realistic, mimetically shaded facial compositions apparently painted into a standard design for court robes (fig. 15). Unfortunately, it is not possible to discern whether they were actually done in a Chinese treaty port from photographs sent there after 1855.

Nineteenth-century Siam presents a different case from Java since the photographic medium was so avidly taken up by actual rulers, beginning with King Mongkut (fig. 16), as a means of breaking the taboo associated with representations of the king in a public, nonsacral space and in showing the image of his person to foreign rulers.¹² The rigid poses demanded of the sitter in King Mongkut's 1855 photograph with his queen, which was sent to President Franklin Pierce in the United States, do not fully indicate the radical change involved in representing the king in the quasi-public circulation of an image to a foreign social peer. The practice of exchanging images of reigning monarchs as a token of good relations was basically introduced into Siam by European conventions in the 1850s. King Mongkut sent daguerreotypes of himself to Queen Victoria in 1857, and others were sent to the pope in 1861 and to France in 1862.¹³ The French government had a portrait statue of King Mongkut made that was based on the received daguerreotype(s); it was sent back to King Mongkut in 1863 (fig. 17). It seems strange to think that merely the exchange of images with European monarchs *in itself* could have initi-



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Anonymous Chinese artist, *King Mongkut*, ca. early 1860s, tempera, 100 x 61 cm, Ambara Villa, Dusit Palace, Bangkok, Thailand. From Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), pl. 71, p. 52. Courtesy of Professor Poshyananda and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.



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Anonymous [Pallegoix?], *King Mongkut and Queen Thepsirin*, ca. 1855, daguerreotype. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, inventory no. 1735.

ated the depiction of Siamese kings. What these exchanges of images may have changed, I suppose, in parallel with the display of photographs of the king to other members of the royal elite, is the function of, and the scale of public access to, such portraits.¹⁴

By 1865, about twenty years after the arrival of photography, King Mongkut knew what it meant to be photographically represented, and he tried to control the manner in which he was shown. John Thomson photographed King Mongkut in both Buddhist robes and in a French field marshal's uniform in Bangkok in 1865. It would appear from Thomson's later recollection that Mongkut stopped him before Thomson could take a photograph of the king praying. King Mongkut himself chose to be shown in a French uniform (fig. 18).¹⁵

His dress was of a spotless white, which reached right down to his feet: his head was bare. I was admiring the simplicity and purity of this attire, when his majesty beckoned me to approach him, and informed me that he wished to have his portrait taken as he knelt in an attitude of prayer. I accordingly adjusted my instrument, but not without a feeling of surprise, for as I had thought, incorrectly, as I afterwards discovered, that a Buddhist had no need of prayer. All was prepared beneath a space in the court, which had been canopied and carpeted for this special purpose; when,



17A



17B

17A

Anonymous photographer, *King Mongkut*. Given to Napoleon III on July 27, 1861, this photograph formed the basis for the sculpture by Chatrousse, no. 17b, Chateau de Fontainebleau and Réunion des Musées Nationaux, France.

17B

Émile-François Chatrousse (1829–1876), *King Mongkut*, 1863, gilded metal, H. 59 cm, Ratcha Karanyasapha Throne Hall, Grand Palace, Bangkok, Thailand. From Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), pl. 27.1, p. 24. Courtesy of Professor Poshyananda and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.

just as I was about to take the photograph, his majesty changed his mind, and without a word to anyone passed suddenly out of sight ... at length the King reappeared, dressed this time in a sort of French field marshal's uniform. There was no cotton stuff visible about his person now, not even stockings. The portrait was a great success, and his majesty afterwards sat in his court robes, requesting me to place him where and how I pleased. ... Here was a difficulty. How to pose an Oriental potentate who has his own ideas as to propriety in attitude, and that, too, without touching a fold of his garments. I told the King, in plain English, what I wanted to do, and he said, "Mr Town-shun, do what you require for the excellency of your photograph."¹⁶

King Mongkut already comprehended how a different image would be presented by his appearing in a photograph as a monk or in French uniform. It may well be supposed that Mongkut's understanding of differentiations in foreign perceptions mediated by dress came from his long-standing relations with the Roman Catholic priest Abbé Pallegoix, who had resided in Bangkok since 1830 and had known the king prior to his ascending the throne. Pallegoix had another priest bring the first daguerreotype camera from Paris in July 1845, and he probably took the photograph that was sent to President Pierce in 1856.¹⁷

King Mongkut was dissatisfied with a French sculpture that represented him in what a European might consider to be the manner of an exotic African prince. This later caused him to have a sculptural representation of himself made from life, the first recorded time that this had been done for a Thai monarch (fig. 19). The sculpture was completed shortly after the king's death in 1868. His actions of sending his



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John Thomson, *King Mongkut of Siam*, 1866, modern albumen print from wet collodion negative, 25.4 x 20.3 cm, Wellcome Collection, London, copy in National Library of Scotland.



19

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Luang Tephrochana (Plub), *King Mongkut*, 1860, bronze sculpture, H. 176 cm, Tamnak Phetch, Wat Bowonniwetwihan, Bangkok, Thailand. From Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), pl. 24, p. 20. Courtesy of Professor Poshyananda and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.



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Basuki Abdullah, *King Bhumipol Adulyadej*, ca. 1960–62, oil on canvas, 272 x 150 cm, Chakri Throne Room, Grand Palace, Bangkok, Thailand. From Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), pl. 318, p. 297. Courtesy of Professor Poshyananda and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.

photograph to President Pierce,¹⁸ changing his clothes for Thomson's photograph in 1866, and commissioning a Siamese sculptor to depict him more naturalistically from life all suggest King Mongkut was intimately aware of, and to some extent tried to vary, the presentational qualities of his own image.

Furthermore, the resulting realist sculpture hints at the role of photography in providing a check on the verisimilitude of representation. We may infer that it served Mongkut as a conscious indicator of how lifelike representations could, on the one hand, be subject to the vagaries of other visual conventions, such as when they are turned into French sculpture, or equally on the other hand, as a check on accurate or lifelike representation. There are actually two versions of the sculpture portrait of King Mongkut of circa 1863–68. One is in Tamnak Phet, Wat Bowon Niwet, and the other is in Phra Thinang Wechayan Wichian Prasat, the temple at the top of King Mongkut's summer palace complex in Phetchaburi, which was begun ten years earlier in circa 1858. At that location the main image serves in a kind of cult worship. I do not know which one is the original, but I suppose it to be that at Wat Bowon Niwet. When Thomson visited Phetchaburi with Dr. Bradley around 1866,¹⁹ he thought the new summer palace had been designed and erected "after the model of Windsor."²⁰ These casual remarks may indicate Thomson understood the broader cultural discourses into which the reception of photographic practice fitted in Siam.

The task of photographically ordained realism is to grasp the world in material form as presence, not merely as likeness, and this was particularly the case in Japan with the early Western-style painting of Takahashi Yuichi. The Siamese representation of the monarch, however, and its relation to photographic criteria of verisimilitude extend to present-day Thailand. King Mongkut established the rule that the

monarch could be represented and his image could be seen by others. His son, King Chulalongkorn, took the notion further by allowing the image of the monarch to be circulated well beyond ritual or ceremonial spaces. Beginning his reign under a regent from 1868 to 1873, he commissioned many portraits of himself and his family by the leading European artists of his period of rule. King Chulalongkorn and other members of his court were besotted by the camera, so the additional awareness of how representations were pictorially framed and then photographs taken, which he learned during his childhood, clearly enters into his self-presentation by oil portraitists.²¹

This double perception of identity between the camera and the canvas continued down to the reign of King Bhumibol (Rama IX, reigned 1946 to present), as seen in photographs of him being painted around 1962 by the Indonesian portraitist Basuki Abdullah (1915–1993).²² Basuki served as court painter to President Sukarno in Indonesia, and also the Thai elite in Bangkok from 1960 to 1962 and later, as well as to the Marcos oligarchy in the Philippines in 1978.²³ His portrait style thus constituted something of an official high style in Southeast Asia from the 1960s to the 1980s. Basuki's resulting grand portrait of King Bhumibol,²⁴ with its brightly lit face radiating intelligent beneficence as well as martial determination shown in the resolutely grasped sword (fig. 20), bespeaks the subject's sharp awareness of self-presentation as much as his knowledge of how photographically enhanced verisimilitude governs the tangible presence of royal aura. It is no coincidence that King Bhumibol has been a keen photographer and that many of the palace's official photographs feature him carrying or using a camera. This is also obvious in later celebratory posters, where the fixity of the king's gaze (he lost the sight in one eye in a car accident as a youth) and the apparently uneasy rigid formal pose indicate his awareness of the required aura he should emanate.

The widespread use of strict *lèse-majesté* law makes direct association with royal images taboo in Thailand, but a former student radical and now major Thai intellectual, Thirayut Boonmee, has written on "The photographs in the front of the photographer's shop" (fig. 21).²⁵ He points to a peculiar Thai fusion of seniority, dignity, bemedalled decoration, and magical, karmically endowed presence that is much presented and manipulated by Thai persons of rank to cement the power of the "dignity" of their station over the executive "efficiency" of their posts.

Some Theoretical Extensions

In my description I have deliberately avoided starting from theoretical premises so as to allow the empirical, historical material its own play. Photographs in Java and Siam incorporate all the discursive properties of earlier portraits, but they indexically re-endow the world with their magical powers, almost in the way indicated



21

21

Clare Veal, Photographs in the shop of Chaya Jittakorn, Bangkok, 2012.

by Roland Barthes: “Photography’s inimitable feature (its *noeme*) is that someone has seen the referent (even if it is a matter of objects) *in flesh and blood*, or again *in person*.”²⁶

I have now identified for nineteenth-century Indonesia and Thailand the various roles of photography in transmitting the conventions of prior visual discourses, the individuating of particular sitters,²⁷ and the self-conscious propagandizing of the sitter’s self-image. Photography does this in ways that link such images on the one hand to conventions of public painted portraiture and on the other to the display of dignified aura that replicates the original—one can say primal—magical materialization which is technically embodied in the medium. Rosalind Morris draws the antithesis between the ethnographical stereotype she understands Thomson sought and the memory image, the last recalled image of a person that generates a sense of his or her “truth,” which Siegfried Kracauer calls the monogram.²⁸ This position sees photography and its theorization as being caught between a present-seeking simplification via a category of presumed and external being, and a thanatographic position of the resultant work as the record of someone or something that is dead to the viewer or is seen from the position of the will-have-died.²⁹ In Siam the photograph of the ruler is allied with a cult of king images, one learned in part from exchanges with European monarchs, but one also linked to a cult worship of former and deceased monarchs made instinct with power. By the late nineteenth century at least, these sculptures were enshrined in a royal pantheon.³⁰ This was not strictly speaking a mausoleum, but the images enshrined were generally those of the dead.

Morris thinks that Kracauer’s “implicit accusation [is] against the typological ethos in photography, on the grounds that it misrecognises in the timely photograph the timeless image of the social type.” The hermeneutic position of thanatography as an allegory of what it means to have lived recurs often in Kracauer’s text

“Photography” in a way that became a basic trope of photographic theory in the writings of Barthes and Sontag.

What photographs by their sheer accumulation attempt to banish is the recollection of death, which is part and parcel of every memory image. In the illustrated magazines the world has become a photographable present, and the photographed present has been entirely eternalized. Seemingly ripped from the clutch of death, in reality it has succumbed to it.³¹

I have found thanatographic mapping in photographic theory unsatisfactory as a general position in understanding the interpretive function of portrait photographs as made images. We can ask if the photograph always functions as a memory of the dead and as a proleptic envisaging of those who will die. Clearly the Javanese and Siamese photographs are also highly motivated images of persons empowered to move between cultures, as in the case of Saleh, or to occupy a position of sacred and karmically merited power, as in the case of King Mongkut. The difference between the (photo-theoretical) status of the image of an artist and of a living king may be that however much the indexical image of the latter memorializes power, and ultimately tries to carry this power into a lineage that continues beyond the king's own death, the artist, having made images himself, leaves more room for the unmotivated photo images' play within the life he lives.

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NOTES

- 1 This paper is revised from a public lecture presented at the conference *In the Image of Asia* at the National Gallery of Australia in August 2010 and is shortened from my paper for the conference *Imperial Exposure* in December 2011. The section on Japan in the original paper is set aside here for reasons of space. The essay here forms part of my wider study on "Asian modern," which looks at around twenty-five artists in five cohorts from the 1850s to the 1990s, handled in parallel across countries and not sequentially within them. For research funding I am grateful to the Australian Research Council and the University of Sydney.
- 2 See Mildred Archer, assisted by Graham Parlett, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, and Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 1992), illus. no. 134.
- 3 The website of KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) gives this photograph as being from before 1880, but it does not identify the photographer, who might have been Isidore van Kinsbergen. See Gerda Theuns-de Boer and Saskia Asser with contributions by Steven Wachlin, *Isidore van Kinsbergen (1821–1905): Fotopionier en theatermaker in Nederlands-Indië / Photo pioneer and theatre maker in the Dutch East Indies* (Leiden: KITLV Press, and Amsterdam: Huis Marseille, 2005). According to Theuns-de Boer, *Isidore van Kinsbergen*, 277, Kinsbergen was in Yogyakarta photographing antiquities from July to September 1865. Possible teachers of Cephas are discussed by Gerrit Knapp, *Cephas, Yogyakarta: Photography in the service of the Sultan* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999), 7.
- 4 *Journal de la Haye*, Wednesday, September 24, 1834, records a work in the Dutch Salon, an exposition of works by living masters founded in 1808 by Louis Napoléon: "No. 377, a portrait of a man by Radeen [*sic*] Saleh of Java, found presently at La Haye/Den Haag. It is perhaps the first time that one sees in this country, and probably in Europe, a painting by an inhabitant of this island. ..." See Marie-Odette Scalliet, "Raden Saleh et les Hollandais: artiste protégé ou otage politique," *Archipel* 69 (2005), 208. According to David Clarke, *Chinese Art and Its Encounter with the World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 31, the first Chinese artist to exhibit his work at the Royal Academy in London was a portrait sculpture by Chitqua in 1770. See my review of August 30, 2012, at www.caareviews.org.
- 5 See Peter Carey, *A. Payen. Voyage à Djocja Karta en 1825* (Paris: Cahier d'Archipel, 1988); Marie-Odette Scalliet, *Antoine Payen, peintre des Indes orientales: vie et écrits d'un artiste due XIXe siècle (1792–1853)* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995); and Marie-Odette Scalliet, "Beelden van Ost-Indië: die collectie Bik in het Rijksprentenkabinet," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 49 (2001). Raden Saleh was the subject of a major exhibition at the Galeri Nasional in Jakarta in June 2012. The catalogue, edited by Werner Kraus, should appear in 2013. At an associated international symposium, the proceedings of which should appear in 2014, I presented the paper "Hybridity and discursial placement: The case of Raden Saleh."
- 6 See my brief essay, "The Southeast Asian Modern," in Nora Taylor, ed., *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art: An Anthology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
- 7 See Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), on the

- use of photography by Horace Vernet and Gustave Courbet.
- 8 See, inter alia, Unknown Calcutta artist, *Portrait of a Calcutta Banian*, ca. 1850, watercolor on ivory, 20.2 x 15.2 cm, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.
 - 9 See Virginia Surtees, *Charlotte Canning: Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria and Wife of the first Viceroy of India 1817–1861* (London: John Murray, 1975), 158.
 - 10 See the very stimulating studies in Phanunphong Lawhasom and Chaiyot Isawonpan, *Plian phun, plaeng phaaph: prap ruup, pbrung laay* [Vary the ground, vary the picture; make ready the form, vary the lines] (Bangkok: Muang Boran, BE 2549, 2006), on the role of mirrors in changes in visual representation of mural painting between Rama II and Rama III.
 - 11 Although not common, these have been known since the sixteenth century in Thailand. The earliest surviving example is almost certainly of the king as a standing Shiva in 1510. It is now kept at the Sri Satchanalai Museum.
 - 12 On representing the Siamese king's image, in the first half of a longer paper, see John Clark, "Icon and Image in Modern Thai Art: A preliminary exploration," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 3 (2011), Special Issue: Aesthetics in Southeast Asia. For theorizing Thai photography in the nineteenth century, see Rosalind C. Morris, "Photography and the power of images in the history of power: Notes from Thailand," included in Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Photographies East: The Camera and Its Histories in East and Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). For a general theorization of the political and cultural functions of images in Siam (later Thailand), see Peter A. Jackson, "The performative state: Semi-coloniality and the tyranny of images in modern Thailand" and "The Thai Regime of Images," both in *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 19, no. 2 (2004).
 - 13 The 1861 photograph of Mongkut for the pope is discussed in comparison with a later 1870s photograph of King Chulalongkorn by Caverlee Cary in "The Image of the King: Two Photographs from Nineteenth Century Siam," in Nora A. Taylor, ed., *Studies in Southeast Asian Art: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. O'Connor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). Two basic compilations of early Thai photography are Sakda Siripant, *Kasatri & klong: wiwathana-kaan kaan thay phaaph nay pratheeth thay*, p.s.2388–2535 [King and camera: Evolution of photography in Thailand 1845–1992] (Bangkok: Darnsutha Press, 1992), and Anake Nawigamune, *Prawatikaan thaay ruup yukh reek khong thay* [History of early photography in Thailand] (Bangkok: Sarakadee Parp Press, 2005).
 - 14 Many people still felt the taboo against showing representations of the king *in public*, believing photographs would shorten their lives. See Siripant, *Kasatri & klong*, 23. Some discussion of changes in public sculptural and painted representation of the king is in Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7–19, and his catalogue of the Thai Royal Collections contains much more detailed information on the rise of royal portraiture. See Apinan Poshyananda, *Western-Style Painting and Sculpture in the Royal Thai Court*, 2 vols. (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]). Unfortunately, this large book, which is full of valuable art historical information and images, was never published in paperback, and it is now out of print. See my review in *Art and Asia Pacific* 2, no. 1 (July 1994), where I first raised these queries.
 - 15 See Stephen White, *John Thomson: A Window on the Orient* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), and John Thomson, *The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China; or, Ten Years' travels, adventures, and residence abroad* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1875), chap. 4.
 - 16 See Thomson, *Straits of Malacca*, 93–94. I am grateful to Clare Veal for this suggestion.
 - 17 See Siripant, *Kasatri & klong*, 19–27. Pallegoix asked another French priest, Père Larnaudie, to bring the camera from Paris, according to archival documents at the Missions Étrangères in Paris that were seen and reproduced in Siripant, *Kasatri & klong*, 22.
 - 18 According to A. Low Moffat, *Mongkut, King of Siam* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 190, King Mongkut's gifts to President Pierce were sent in July 1856, but President James Buchanan was in office when they arrived. The gifts included a daguerreotype of King Mongkut with Her Royal Highness the Princess Rambery Bhamaarabhiramy, along with a sword, a kris, a dagger, spears, scissors, an enameled bamboo pipe, silver articles, Siamese-made Japanese vases, a great drum, drums and flageolets, gilt silk cloth, and Poom cloth.
 - 19 Thomson, *Straits of Malacca*, 108–17.
 - 20 Thomson, *Straits of Malacca*, 112. The architect of the Phra Nakhon Siri complex visited London in 1858 in the delegation that was exchanging gifts with Queen Victoria.
 - 21 See Nawigamune, *Prawatikaan thaay ruup yukh reek khong thay*, and Siripant, *Kasatri & klong*.
 - 22 See Agus Dermawan T., *R. Basoeki Abdullah, RA* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1985), 35–37.

- 23 See Agus, *R. Basoeki Abdullah*, 38.
- 24 See fig. 20.
- 25 See Thirayuth Boonmee, "Roop thaay naa raan thaay roop" [Photographs in the front of the photographer's shop], in *Suan nueng khong kwaam songcham yeessip-pii sipsii tula lae pai khangnaa* [Part of memory, 20 years of October 14, looking towards the future] (Bangkok, Winyuchon Publishing House, 1994), 47–50.
- 26 See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* [French original, 1980, tr. Richard Howard] (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 79.
- 27 On individuation through photographic representation, see Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: British Library, 2008), 108–11, 144–45.
- 28 Morris, *Photographies East*, 4.
- 29 Morris, *Photographies East*, 5.
- 30 Worship of ancestors and the possession of paladinlike images as symbols of sacred accession to kingship may be inferred as Khmer customs that were taken into Siam with other aspects of Khmer court ritual in seventeenth-century Ayutthaya.
- 31 See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament, Weimar Essays*, tr. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 59.

THE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF ROYAL PORTRAITURE IN THAILAND

Abstract

Unlike the rest of nineteenth-century Southeast Asia, where it was a colonial import, photography in Thailand was a technology localized by the indigenous monarchy, which utilized it as a tool for fashioning a modern, demotic public image. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, photography promoted the re-enchantment of the monarchy, as evidenced by the iconic status attributed to the king's portraits. By examining the production, circulation, and reception of photographic portraits at two historical junctures—the second half of the nineteenth century and the second half of the twentieth—when the monarchy underwent major reconfigurations, this paper places these images in the broader context of Thailand's cultural and political change.

IN 2002 THAILAND AND THE UNITED STATES veered dangerously close to a diplomatic incident when a Philadelphia newspaper printed an advertisement for a local bar that featured, oddly enough, an image of Thailand's incumbent monarch, Bhumibol Adulyadet (Rama IX), in the guise of a hip-hop hipster with shaved temples and blonde highlights, wearing stone-studded shades and a uniform with Adidas emblems. The advertisement incurred the wrath of Thailand's consul general in New York. When it circulated on the Internet, it also enraged Thais around the world, leading to its prompt withdrawal.¹

The heated reaction to this innocuous, if culturally tactless, visual joke was explained by virtue of the semidivine status accorded to the Thai sovereign. Prevalent perception of his portrait as emanation, rather than as representation, of the monarch's mystical self would appear to be related—in a country where Buddhism and the throne are closely intertwined—to popular devotion. In fact, in the 1920s the king was lampooned in cartoons, and from the mid-1930s throughout the 1940s the public display of the king's portrait was proscribed. Afterwards, royal images displayed in public spaces, and more recently in cyberspace, have been protected from possible defacement by the *lèse-majesté* law. Social perception of the king's portrait as possessing a degree of sacrality must hence be understood as a function not of a timeless royal mystique, but of its reconstitution during the current reign, which was officially inaugurated in 1946.

This article seeks to establish an analytical relationship between Thailand's changing political order—from an absolute monarchy subject to Western influences (and interferences) to a constitutional monarchy where the throne wields a degree of moral authority that far exceeds that carried by constitutional monarchs elsewhere—and the visual economy that regulates the production and reception of royal images. It focuses on two historical junctures—the second half of the nine-

teenth century and the second half of the twentieth—when the monarchy underwent major institutional and symbolic reconfigurations.

Representing the Royal Self in Modernizing Siam: From Taboo to Overexposure

The localization of photography, as well as of the representational mode of European portraiture, in late nineteenth-century Siam (as Thailand was known until 1938) took place under the aegis not of a colonial regime, as in the rest of Southeast Asia, but of the indigenous monarchy as part of the refashioning of its public image as a national, progressive institution. Indeed, of all the modern consumer products the Thai court craved, cameras became the one most closely associated with it.² The early history of photography in the kingdom is part and parcel of the Thai elite's engagement with the Western culture and technology that was foisted by imperialism.

Rooted in the Indo-Buddhist concepts of divine and moral kingship (*devaraja/dhammaraja*), the Thai royal mystique thrived on the monarch's remoteness from the public gaze in both person and effigy. Commoners had to lower their eyes at royal processions, and even foreign envoys were forbidden from looking at the sovereign during royal audiences. Unlike other Asian pictorial traditions, royal portraiture was absent in premodern Siam, where, following a Khmer custom, images of the Buddha were dedicated to memorialize kings both in life and death.³ Royal portraiture first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century as the by-product of mechanical reproduction, when the newly invented photographic technology was placed in the service of the representational needs that arose when the Thai royalty reoriented their social identity from the civilizational sphere irradiating from India, and to a lesser extent China, to one centered in Europe.⁴

Photography, as I have argued at length elsewhere, was critical to the construction, rather than the mere projection, of the Thai royalty's modern, or "civilized," image.⁵ When compared to the social function of portraiture in Europe,⁶ the Thai court's experience arguably mirrors that of the bourgeoisie rather than of the aristocracy. Middle-class Europeans who had never sat for a painted portrait were now able to enhance their self-awareness of facial expression and bodily deportment by posing in front of a camera and then scrutinizing their own image.⁷ This analogy is historically apt because at this juncture members of the court also selectively adopted Western corporeal and sartorial etiquette to fashion their modern selves. The royalty's appropriation of photography as a self-fashioning tool is underscored by the comment of a foreign adviser, who noted in the early 1900s how nobles were, like ordinary Thais, in the habit of chewing betel leaves and "only clean their teeth when they want to be photographed, and then we see their admirable white teeth."⁸



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Anonymous, *King Mongkut and Queen Thepsirin*, ca. 1855, daguerreotype. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, inventory no. 1735.

The first portrait ever of a Thai monarch is most likely due to a French Catholic missionary, Father Larnaudie, who is known to have brought a daguerreotype to Bangkok in 1845.⁹ This is the circa 1855 double portrait of King Mongkut (reigned 1851–68) and Queen Thepsirin that was sent with a royal missive to President Franklin Pierce in 1856 following the signing of a commercial treaty with the United States (fig 1).¹⁰ In this portrait King Mongkut wears an embroidered robe over a shirt (and not over royal attire), and he and Thepsirin are posed like a couple, even though Thai monarchs were polygamous until 1910. These facts might be understood as a nod to the democratic ideals and puritanical ethos of the addressee. Mongkut was aware that foreign monarchs exchanged portraits as a means of diplomatic relations. Other daguerreotypes of Mongkut with Queen Thepsirin and their children, possibly taken by Luang Wisut Yothamat (the court official who first mastered the new technology), were delivered by Siamese embassies to Queen Victoria in 1857 and to Pope Pius IX and Emperor Napoleon III in 1861.¹¹

While rejecting taboos on representing the royal body accords with King Mongkut's celebrated role as a modernizer, his portraits were not destined for a domestic audience; their distribution as diplomatic gifts to Western heads of state instead suggests Mongkut's concern with international recognition of his status as the sovereign of Siam.¹² This awareness is highlighted in photographer John Thomson's recollection of his session with King Mongkut in 1865, which resulted in two portraits: a frontal one posed against a dark cloth backdrop (fig. 2), and one taken outdoor in a three-quarters position. In both portraits the king wears an embroidered uniform, a ceremonial sash and saber, along with the Legion d'Honneur (bestowed on him by Napoleon III) pinned on his chest.



2

2
John Thomson, *King Mongkut*,
ca. 1865. Wellcome Library,
London.

His dress was a robe of spotless white, which reached down to his feet. ... [He] informed me that he wished to have his portrait taken as he knelt in an attitude of prayer. I accordingly adjusted my instrument ... when, just as I was about to take the photograph, his majesty changed his mind, and without a word to anyone passed suddenly out of sight. ... The King reappeared dressed this time as in a sort of French field marshal's uniform.¹³

Thomson also photographed Mongkut's eldest son, Prince Chulalongkorn, at the age of twelve, ahead of the tonsure ceremony (the Thai rite of passage into puberty) and dressed in a traditional outfit and accoutrements. Also, in what is the last image of Mongkut before his death in 1868 (taken by an anonymous photographer), he and Prince Chulalongkorn appear full length standing next to each other, both dressed in fancy uniforms. At a time when patrilinear succession lacked codification in Siam's palatine law and was complicated by the institution of a "second king" (*uparat*), this double portrait might be read as a visual proclamation of Chulalongkorn's right to be heir to the throne. He went on to become Rama V (reigned 1868–1910), one of the nineteenth-century's most photographed monarchs, and he himself developed into an enthusiastic photographer. Images of him can be categorized into three types: 1) studio portraits by professional photographers whose identity is known that were taken for the court's consumption but were occasionally circulated as postcards or illustrations in books and magazines; 2) photographs taken by anonymous photographers that document current events, such as public ceremonies and overseas travels; and 3) amateur photographs (largely kept in



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Francis Chit (Khun Sonthornsathitsalak), *King Chulalongkorn, Rama V, on his second coronation, 1873*. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Purchased 2006.

Thailand's National Archives) that were taken by the king and members of the court, and today are often in the public domain because of the media's memorialization of King Chulalongkorn.¹⁴

These latter photographs show King Chulalongkorn's adroitness—and obvious delight—at posing for the camera. It is the formal portraits—from that taken at his second coronation in October 1873 by Francis Chit (Bangkok's first commercial photographer), showing him enthroned in Indic royal robes (fig. 3), to later ones in Western dress—that most obviously convey the refashioning of the monarchy's image. Contemporary Western modes of family portraiture in the early 1880s, which prized formality but also allowed feelings to be expressed, inform some photographs of the king with his children. Photographs like these, which were also rendered into engraved illustrations for books, such as Carl Bock's *Temples and Elephants* (1884), were clearly intended for foreign more than domestic audiences, since they projected an image of Rama V as a civilized Asian monarch and an affectionate father. By the early 1890s, with the commercialization of photography that followed improvements in dry-plate technology, several foreign-owned studios that catered to both the Thai elite and Western expatriates had opened in Bangkok. Most of the studio owners were German, including G. R. Lambert, H. Schüren, W. K. Loftus, and F. Schumann. The studio of Robert Lentz, which opened in 1894, became a favorite with the royal family.

Typical of Lentz's production is a full-length portrait of King Chulalongkorn (fig. 4), dressed in a hybrid uniform with a white jacket, folded silk cloth as lower garment (*chongkraben*), stockings, and leather shoes. The composition, with the



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Robert Lentz, *King Chulalongkorn*,
early 1890s. National Archives of
Thailand.

subject standing next to a table holding his feathered helmet in place of traditional regalia against a painted backdrop, conforms to the typical aesthetics of late nineteenth-century photo studios, which, in critical theorist Walter Benjamin's words, "with their drapes and palms, tapestries and easels occupy so equivocal a place between torture chamber and throne room."¹⁵ Benjamin alludes here to the deployment of conventions associated with royal portraiture to depict bourgeois males whose authority over the household realm was being proclaimed. Lentz's portrait, however, domesticates the kingly status of Rama V, his sacral aura cropped to fit the photograph's demotic representational space. The colonnade painted on the studio's backdrop canvas evokes as a simulacrum the neoclassical Chakri Throne Hall that was built in the 1870s to signal the court's new cultural orientation towards the West.

Lentz also owned a studio in Singapore, where King Chulalongkorn and the males in his party spent an entire day during a state visit in May 1896. This rehearsal in self-presentation on the colonial stage was done in preparation for the king's first European tour in 1897. An entry in the royal journal reads: "The heat almost made me dizzy when we arrived at 9 a.m." (Torture chamber indeed!) Two group portraits of the royal retinue were taken that day: in one they appear wearing frock coats, bow- or neckties, and top hats; in the other they wear the white linen suits and homburg hats of late-Victorian gentlemen at leisure. At his Bangkok studio Lentz took a portrait of Rama V, Queen Saowapha, and five princes (fig. 5), which served as the model for Odoardo Gelli's painting *The Royal Family* (1899). While Gelli sketched from life in Florence King Chulalongkorn and his two eldest sons, Princes Chakraphong and Vajiravudh (who in the photograph had been substituted for by two brothers), he replicated Lentz's posing and arrangement of the subjects—most



5
Robert Lentz, *King Chulalongkorn, Queen Saowapha and their children*, ca. 1896. National Archives of Thailand.



6
Odoardo Gelli, *The Royal Family*, 1899. Courtesy of the Bureau of the Royal Household, Thailand.

notably, the queen's pensive expression as she looks obliquely away from the viewer (fig. 6). Where the painting differs from the photograph is in the emphasis lent by the oil medium on luxury materials associated with royal status.¹⁶

Gelli's painting, which has only recently become known through reproductions, warrants attention for its function more than for its artistic qualities. Historian Simon Schama, in discussing "domestic" royal portraits that were widely circulated through lithographic reproductions, remarks that "the nineteenth-century royal families were ... the very opposite of the image that they projected,"¹⁷ for they continued to elude bourgeois notions of romantic love and marital fidelity even as their domestic representation pandered to the national bourgeois classes to which they owed their post-Napoleonic survival. In the case of Gelli's group portrait, the disparity between the familial cliché it evoked and reality was even wider, for the Thai court practiced both polygamy and endogamy (Chulalongkorn's three highest-ranking queens were sisters as well as his own half-sisters, having all been fathered by King Mongkut). While Gelli portrayed only the dynastically significant nucleus of this large royal family, his work was not meant to pander to middle-class sensibilities that were still embryonic in turn-of-the-century Siam, where the gentry too practiced polygamy. Commissioning the painting was an act of conspicuous consumption that projected—on a scale (and cost) way above that associated with photography—the self-image of the Thai court as members of the world's royalty. This identification occurred at the level of visual representation as well as of consumption under the regime of bourgeois aesthetic that in the age of capital and empire homogenized elite tastes across nations.¹⁸

Portraiture and the Monarchy's Re-enchantment: From Mechanical Reproduction to Iconicization

By the final years of King Chulalongkorn's reign, his likeness was impressed on coins and stamps, and his larger-than-life equestrian statue dominated Bangkok's public space. It is hard to say how ordinary people might have approached "secular" images like these, which symbolized the modern state, but one can hypothesize that reproducing the king's portrait on objects as ephemeral as postcards led to the erosion of his mystique.¹⁹ Once the royal portrait had been reduced to an incon-

spicuous commodity, its perversion into a caricature followed suit in the changed socio-political climate of the Sixth Reign (1910–25). The devotional approach to photographic portraits of deceased Thai monarchs, as historian H. G. Quaritch Wales witnessed in the 1920s,²⁰ admittedly supports the counter-argument that mechanical reproduction did not demystify the royal aura but, on the contrary, increased it by making the king's likeness "available to foreigners and more Thais than would normally have seen it in the royal pantheon, and then to Thais beyond the court through reproduction."²¹

The distinction between worship and memorization of deceased kings demands further scrutiny.²² Yet, even if one agrees that photographic portraits of Thai monarchs were always approached as iconic rather than as indexical images, or as presence rather than likeness to borrow Hans Belting's phrase,²³ they nevertheless exhibit aesthetic and material characteristics that are fundamentally different from those of (Buddhist) icons: unlike the non-mimetic, "perennial" quality of the latter, photographic portraits highlight the king's historical nature by showing how his image changed through time. Moreover, not only are the *material* characteristics of a photograph different from those of a stone or bronze statue, but they also have "a profound impact on the way images are 'read,' as different material forms both signal and determine different expectations and use patterns."²⁴

These considerations matter for analyzing the different forms in which royal portraits currently circulate in Thailand's social space (including painted panels and printed and televised images), and the ascription to them of iconic status, which, I argue, is the by-product of the reconstitution of the monarchy's mystique over the past half a century. The formulation—for the first time in Thai visual culture—of an official royal iconography, together with the legal prosecution of iconoclasm, points to the preeminence of visuality in the re-enchantment of the monarchy. Such preeminence is not surprising when one considers the novel role of television in circulating the royal image since the late 1950s.²⁵ Indeed, like televised images, photographic portraits of Rama IX also tend to elide the mark of authorship—an intriguing parallel with the anonymity of icons, whose aura overpowers the skills of their makers. The intimate relationship between monarchy and photography is expressed by King Bhumibol's own celebrated activity as a hobby photographer and by the prominence of the camera as an attribute of his iconography—a sort of prosthetic eye surveying the kingdom and its inhabitants.

An analysis of the monarchy's re-enchantment, a political as much as a symbolic phenomenon, is beyond the scope of this paper. Attention is rather directed toward key moments in the construction of the auratic image of Rama IX during his long reign. Photographs of Bhumibol in the 1950s—he was born in 1927 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and raised in Switzerland—show him as a young man learning to



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Anonymous, *King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit*, ca. 1950.

wear the emperor's clothes, literally as much as metaphorically. After a quarter century without a resident monarch (Rama VII abdicated in 1935), and with its powers severely curbed by the constitution of 1932 and later legislation, the monarchy was largely a façade institution by the time King Bhumibol permanently returned to Thailand in 1951. This dissimulation can be detected in some portraits of the royal couple taken at the time of their wedding in 1950 (fig. 7), for which they posed dressed in "traditional" costumes resembling those of the musical *The King and I*, which opened on Broadway in 1951. In the course of their 1960 world tour, King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit were photographed with foreign monarchs, heads of state, and even entertainers, such as Benny Goodman and Elvis Presley. Young and cosmopolitan, the Thai royals were the perfect advertisement for a country that, in the midst of decolonization and the Cold War, proclaimed its place in the "Free World" led by the United States.

During the 1960s, when a monarchical revival was initiated under the military's vigilant gaze, the royal persona was represented mostly by his family life and hobby activities (sailing, music, and photography). While still lending its legitimacy to military rule, the throne also started reaching out both to the rural population and to emerging social groups. In October 1973, when the student unions orchestrated massive demonstrations to demand the resignation of the military junta that two years earlier had dissolved parliament and suspended the constitution, the throne unexpectedly lent them the support that prompted their victory. By rallying in the streets and holding large photographs of the king and queen as virtual shields against the threat of army and police charges, the students initiated the mobilization of royal images to partisan politics that has since become commonplace in Thailand. The alliance of students and monarchy, however, did not last long; the throne-supported reaction erupted on October 6, 1976, when armed and paramilitary groups stormed the campus of Thammasat University in Bangkok. Tellingly, the *casus belli* involved the alleged offense to a royal effigy, for the students were falsely accused of mock-hanging a puppet representing the crown prince.

In the years between the crisis of legitimacy born out of the October 1976 coup and the "democratic revolution" of May 1992, King Bhumibol's auratic persona attained full configuration, and an official royal iconography was elaborated accordingly. Concurrently, an ideology of charismatic kingship predicated upon the spiritual bond of monarch and subjects was also articulated, and the scope of the *lèse-majesté* law was broadened. The elements of the royal iconography are: the camera, either held in the hands or hanging from the neck; the topographical map of the area being visited, outspread or folded in a jacket pocket; a pencil, a basic instrument used for recording observations; and a bead of sweat on an eyebrow or the tip of the nose.²⁶ Princess Sirindhorn, who routinely traveled with her

father, also acquired much symbolic capital and media visibility. Her demure presentation, a stark contrast to the dominant Thai canon of feminine beauty, perfectly suited her own auratic figure.

Numerous signs of King Bhumibol's incipient apotheosis were evident by the end of the 1980s, a decade punctuated by a series of imposing royal celebrations.²⁷ The frequent pairing of portraits of Rama IX and Rama V on the walls of both public and private premises also promoted the conflation of the former's charismatic authority with the latter's posthumous popular cult, which emerged—as a phenomenon distinct from official commemoration—in the late 1980s. King Bhumibol's ultimate consecration came with the crisis of “Black May” in 1992, which was encapsulated in a single visual moment. On May 20, before a televised audience made of fifty million spectators, the two political opponents behind the previous days' clashes, Generals Suchinda Krapayun and Chamlong Simuang, knelt at the king's feet to receive his admonition to stop the violence. This *mise-en-scène* consecrated Rama IX as *deus ex machina* of Thailand's “democracy with the king as head of state,” a formula later enshrined in the so-called People's Constitution of 1997, which reaffirmed the sacredness and inviolability of both the sovereign's physical person and of its visual and verbal representations.

This provision has brought about a worrying multiplication in the charges of *lèse majesté*, including offenses to royal images. In March 2007, a Swiss man residing in Chiang Mai was given a ten-year prison sentence for spraying paint over portraits of King Bhumibol in the street. The beneficiary of a royal pardon, he was nevertheless expelled from the kingdom. In the same year, national access to YouTube was blocked because of a video in which graffiti defaced images of Rama IX.²⁸ Arrests for alleged misplacement of royal images on the Internet were also reported.²⁹ The government-imposed limitations on the use of royal images, part of a wider attempt to impose boundaries on public discourse about the monarchy, signaled the anxieties that agitate the country in the twilight of the present reign.³⁰ Due to the assiduously promoted identification of the sovereign's mystic body with the nation's body politic, King Bhumibol's increasing physical frailness—captured in photographs taken in November 2007 on the day of his discharge from the hospital—became a poignant visual allegory of Thailand's current political malady, which has caused the country to descend into a color-coded feud between the urban-based, royalist “yellow shirts” and the rural-based “red shirts.”

Conclusion

This overview of Thai royal portraiture in photography from its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century has shown the centrality of the medium in the monarchy's self-representation. Rama V and Rama IX stand out in the panorama of modern

monarchs not only for the exceptional duration of their respective reigns but also for the huge amount of visual documentation they generated. Significant differences, however, are evident in the way photography has supported the royal project of self-construction and representation in the two reigns. King Chulalongkorn's enthusiastic patronage of photography in the context of the reorientation of the Thai court's cultural coordinates served the project of reinforcing the monarchy's international and self-image—literally as much as metaphorically—vis-à-vis the threat of colonialism. Photography was embraced as both a representational technology and a consumer practice that connected the court to progress and modernity. This connection was progressively reversed in the course of King Bhumibol's reign. Royal portraits have been invested (or, perhaps, reinvested) with an iconic value that reflects the re-enchantment of the monarchy. Such re-enchantment has made necessary the policing, through *lèse-majesté* law, of the production and circulation of portraits—but while policing was still possible in the economy of printed images, the emergence and spread of electronic media have made it increasingly difficult. Preserving the sacredness of the king's portrait in the age of digital reproduction will test the authority of the Thai monarchy in the years to come.

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NOTES

- 1 American Journalism Review, "The king of bling-bling," accessed April 2, 2012, www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=2616.
- 2 Maurizio Peleggi, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).
- 3 Apinan Poshyananda, *Chittrakam lae patimakam baep tawantok nai racthasan-mak/ Western-style Painting and Sculpture in the Thai Royal Court*, 2 vols. (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household, BE 2535 [1992]), vol. 1: 336.
- 4 Peleggi, *Lords of Things*, 11–14.
- 5 Peleggi, *Lords of Things*, 44–71; Maurizio Peleggi, "Refashioning Civilization: Dress and Bodily Practice in Thai Nation-Building," in *The Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas*, ed. Mina Roces and Louise Edwards (Brighton: Sussex Academic Library, 2007), 67–68.
- 6 See Louis Marin's classic study *Portrait of the King*, trans. M. H. Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
- 7 Alain Corbin, "Backstage," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), vol. 4: 463–64.
- 8 Émile Jottrand, *In Siam*, trans. W.E.J. Tipps (Paris, 1905; Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996), 2.
- 9 Sakda Siriphan, *Kasattri lae khlong* [Kings and cameras] (Bangkok: Dansuttha, 1992), 24.
- 10 The sitting arrangement in this portrait, with Queen Thepsirin seated to the left of King Mongkut, follows the iconography of European royal portraits.
- 11 Sakda, *Kasattri lae klong*, 59–66.
- 12 In 1853 King Mongkut discontinued the tributary missions to China that implied his submission to the emperor; two years later he signed a commercial treaty with Great Britain, which opened the way to other such treaties with Western countries.
- 13 John Thomson, *The Straits of Malacca, IndoChina and China* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1875), 93–94.
- 14 See Irene Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Modernizer: King Chulalongkorn Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).
- 15 Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," in *One-way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 202. An almost identical passage occurs in "A Brief History of Photography," which was originally published in *Die literarische Welt* in 1931.
- 16 Peleggi, *Lords of Things*, 59–68.
- 17 Simon Schama, "The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500–1850," in *Art and History: Images and Their Meaning*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 157.
- 18 Carol A. Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 195–216.
- 19 A question deserving examination is how the sacrality of the royal image, which in principle limits its handling, can be observed in the case of coins and banknotes engraved with the king's likeness.
- 20 H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies* (London: B. Quaritch, 1931), 173.
- 21 John Clark, "Icon and Image in Modern Thai Art: A Preliminary Exploration," *Contemporary Aesthetic* 3 (2011), special issue, *Aesthetic and the Arts in Southeast Asia*, accessed April 2, 2012, www.contemporaryaesthetic.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=626.
- 22 Benjamin notes in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

- (1936) that photographs of absent or dead individuals support a “cult of remembrance” among the people who loved them. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hanna Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–52; for an alternative translation, see Benjamin, *One-way Street*, 228–59.
- 23 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).
 - 24 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, “Introduction,” in *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, ed. E. Edwards and J. Hart (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.
 - 25 Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Modernizer*, 222–23, discusses the two-minute news items titled “Follow in His Majesty’s Footsteps,” which, through the use of slow motion, sound tracks, and image framing, present veritable “moving portraits” of Rama IX. Television broadcasting began in Thailand in 1955.
 - 26 Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Modernizer*, 224–25. Stengs adds to the list of royal portraits’ iconographic elements the walkie-talkie, which however appears rather less frequently than other elements.
 - 27 These included the Chakri bicentennial (1982), the king’s sixtieth birthday and twelve-year cycle (1987), and the year of the longest reign in Thai history (1988).
 - 28 BBC News, “Swiss Man Jailed for Thai Insult,” March 29, 2007, and “More Thai King Videos on YouTube,” April 5, 2007; news.bb.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific, accessed April 2, 2012.
 - 29 Thomas Fuller, “A High-Tech War Against Slightings to a Centuries-Old Monarchy,” *New York Times*, October 2, 2011.
 - 30 See Søren Ivarsson and Lotte Isager, eds., *Saying the Unsayable: Monarchy and Democracy in Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2010), and David Streckfuss, *Truth on Trial in Thailand: Defamation, Treason, and Lèse Majesté* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011). The policing of discourse about the monarchy notoriously included the pressure unsuccessfully exercised on Yale University Press to prevent publication of Paul Handley’s unauthorized biography of Rama IX, *The King Never Smiles*, which is banned in Thailand.



KOREAN ROYAL PORTRAITS IN THE COLONIAL ARCHIVES

Abstract

This article considers photographs of Korea's royal house in an effort to identify their significance within the nation's twentieth-century history. After briefly surveying the early history of photography and royal portraits in late nineteenth-century Korea, it illustrates how images of the royal house became a critical mechanism of Japan's evolving colonial policy in Korea (fig. 1). Subsequent to the 1910 annexation, portraits of the erstwhile crown prince in particular were used to promote themes of the cultural affinities between Japan and Korea, notions of Korea's colonial modernity, and the mobilization of Koreans for Japan's efforts in the Pacific War. As such, royal portraits provide a valuable resource for understanding Korea's place within the Japanese empire and the ways in which the royal iconography was utilized to mobilize the colonial population in Korea.

Photography and the Korean Royal House

Photography is widely thought to have entered Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910) in the 1860s by way of China, when members of a tribute delegation to the Qing court sat for portraits at a commercial studio in Beijing.¹ By the time the kingdom was formally opened to Japan and the West roughly two decades later, Seoul was home to a handful of photography enterprises. On March 13, 1884, Chi Unyŏng (1852–1935) became the first native-born photographer granted a sitting at the palace by King Kojong 高宗 (reigned 1863–1907), alongside the American author Percival Lowell.² Lowell's photographic portrait of the monarch (fig. 2), now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, arguably became the most recognized and reproduced image of the Korean monarch abroad after it appeared in his 1886 travel account *Chosŏn: Land of the Morning Calm*. Chi Unyŏng's photographic portraits of the king, on the other hand, had limited exposure, even within the royal court.³ At issue were a lack of political purpose and the persistence of historical practice. Far from being camera-shy, Kojong is known to have allowed both Korean photographers and foreign visitors, including the Victorian personalities George Curzon and Isabella Bird, to photograph him. Yet the idea of circulating a likeness of the king contradicted centuries of dynastic protocol, and consequently not one of the sessions with Korean photographers yielded an image (none of them survives) that became a representative portrait of the king in the manner of Uchida Kuichi's iconic image of the Meiji emperor or Xunling's series of photographs of the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi.⁴ For the most part, the circulation of portraits at the turn of the twentieth century was confined to foreign visitors or to Seoul's small community of expatriates, and a number of factors prevented royal images from gaining widespread public exposure among Koreans.⁵

¹ "[Emperor Sunjong] Resting at Mansu Hill, P'yŏngyang," 1909. Ha Chŏngung Collection 001-39, National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul.



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Percival Lowell, "His Majesty the King of Korea," 1884. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The lack of a widely circulated official portrait of Kojong in part reflects the limited development of professional photography (equipment and studios) in Korea. More importantly, it marks a failure on the part of the throne to harness the mass-producing capabilities of the new medium. In many ways this critical oversight was consistent with royal policy of the time. To meet the combined challenges of imperialism and political modernity in the late 1890s, Kojong sought to reinvent the Korean kingdom as the Taehan empire 大韓帝國 (1897–1910). During this time, a focus on dynastic renovation yielded a host of measures that were designed to emphasize the centrality of the throne within evolving notions of national identity. Many of the resulting paeans to dynastic glory drew upon traditional media that were monopolized by the literati and laden with political symbolism, including royal genealogical records, monuments, state rituals, and royal portrait paintings. At the same time, informed by various nation-building practices of Meiji Japan and other late nineteenth-century efforts worldwide, Kojong selectively employed modern techniques of what Benedict Anderson termed “official nationalism”—nationalism from above—that fulfilled both modern and atavistic impulses.⁶ The renewed attention to enhancing the prestige of the crown yielded numerous artifacts in the court’s material culture, such as military uniforms, postage stamps, china patterns, royal honors, and the imperial emblem of the plum blossom. Yet for all the resources devoted to enhancing the prestige of the throne, few of these projects were conceived as a way to establish a connection with the Korean populace that might ultimately forge a sense of collective identity.

The Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) prompted a discernible shift in the political uses of royal photography. Japan’s victory enabled it to lay uncontested claim to the peninsula, with Korea designated a protectorate of the empire. Upon assuming the helm of the semicolonial government, the eminent statesman Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) drew upon his previous experience of fashioning the public image of the Meiji emperor.⁷ Seeking to mold Korean national identity in ways that would ultimately help promote Japan’s imperial project, Itō endeavored to shore up Korea’s dynastic legitimacy and by extension emphasize the affinity between the



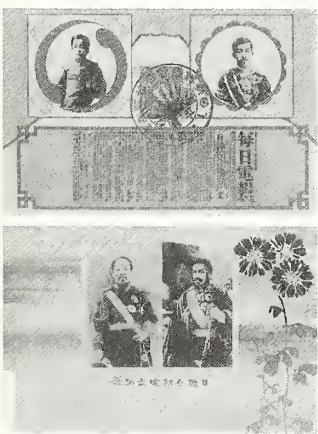
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“Imperial prince of Japan visiting Korea,” 1907. The Museum of Photography, Seoul.



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“Souvenir of the Corean Emperor’s Visit throughout His Empire,” postcard, 1909. Willard D. Straight Papers, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York.



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Commemorative postcards of the 1910 annexation. Minjok munje yŏn’guso, *Singminji Chosŏn kwa chŏnjaeng misul* [Colonial Korea and War Art] (Seoul: Minjok munje yŏn’guso, 2004), p. 24.

two thrones. This approach was especially pronounced during the reign of Korea’s last emperor, Sunjong 純宗 (reigned 1907–10), whose controversial accession to the throne ignited widespread anti-Japanese protests throughout the peninsula. In an effort designed to place the new emperor at the center of the Korean nation, Itō directed the protectorate government to disseminate photographs of the young monarch through various channels, such as hanging formal portraits in schools and administrative offices, and publishing them in newspapers, government publications, textbooks, and as commemorative postcards.

Such colonizing efforts drew upon contributions made by individuals little known today, such as Murakami Tenshin (Kōjiro), a Japanese professional who first made his way to Korea as a newspaper stringer covering the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95).⁸ By 1899 Murakami was among the early wave of Japanese settlers on the peninsula who had established a small business in the Korean capital.⁹ He joined a handful of photographers retained by official Japanese interests to photograph the Korean royal family. After 1907 occasional assignments turned into a full-time occupation when Itō’s promonarchist strategy culminated in a series of high-publicity events: an unprecedented visit to Korea in 1907 by the Japanese crown prince Yoshihito (the future Taishō emperor, reigned 1912–26)¹⁰ (fig. 3); royal birthdays commemorated as national holidays; and an historic tour of the peninsula undertaken by the Korean emperor to herald the new era of Korean-Japanese relations (figs. 1 and 4).¹¹

To be sure, Itō’s policy of exploiting the symbolic capital of the Korean monarchy had its critics in both Korea and Japan. Nonetheless, in the eyes of colonizers such as Itō, photographing the colonial throne emerged as an enduring mechanism by which Japan, right up to the end of World War II, projected not only its self-identity as a model of progress and civilization but also signs of benevolence and cultural affinities within the expanding imperial sphere. Commemorative postcards printed on the occasion of the 1910 annexation appeared to highlight a sense of kinship and bond shared by the two nations’ crown princes (above) and emperors (below), respectively (fig. 5).



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Prince Yōng touring Fukushima Prefecture in Japan with Itō Hirobumi and Prince Arisugawa no miya Takehito, 1909. Ha Chōngung Collection 56, National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul.

7
Wedding photo of Prince Yōng and Princess Masako, 1920. Ha Chōngung Collection 124-1, National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul.

Korea's Colonial Monarchy

Japan's full control over the affairs of the Korean imperial house had been firmly established well before the annexation of Korea in 1910, depriving the throne of any real opportunity to fashion its own representation. For one, photographs of the Taehan crown instead were composed with the island empire as a backdrop, whether conspicuously or implicitly. The main change that accompanied Japan's formal annexation occurred in the management of the monarchy. After 1910 Japan's focus gradually shifted from Sunjong to his half-brother, the erstwhile crown prince, while peripheral and politically awkward family members were air-brushed out of the picture. Appearances by Korea's former rulers Kojong and Sunjong were limited to performances of dynastic rituals held out of the public eye or to choreographed outings to venues, such as an industrial exposition or a fine arts exhibition, intended to demonstrate the old regime's support for the modernizing initiatives of the new.

Japan's focus on Prince Yōng (Yōng ch'inwang Yi Ŭn, 1897–1970), who was taken to Tokyo in 1907 ostensibly to receive a modern education, reflected a new strategy to shift the backdrop of royal photography from the peninsula to the imperial metropole. In 1909, after Itō assumed the role of "royal tutor" and made a point of traveling through the main isles with his young charge, Japanese society embraced the prince as a ward of the empire (fig. 6). In a manner corresponding to the coeval British attempt to order its empire by replicating and binding its colonial hierarchies, especially those of India, the Japanese press focused on Prince Yōng as a way to emphasize the atavistic affinities that connected the two imperial houses.¹² The press also treated the young man's sojourn as evidence of the Japanese empire's role in replacing China as the center of East Asian civilization and modernity.¹³

Newspapers in both countries introduced readers to every stage of Prince Yōng's imperial education as he assumed his place alongside scions of the Japanese aristocracy, first as a student at the Peers School (Gakushuin), followed by enrollment in the military academy and a commission as an officer of the Imperial Japanese Army.¹⁴ Japanese insistence upon his thorough assimilation as an imperial subject



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 Prince Yōng and Princess Masako
 at Ch'angdōk Palace, Seoul, 1922.
 National Museum of Korea, Seoul.

led to a political marriage to a woman of Japanese noble lineage, Princess Nashimoto no miya Masako (Yi Pangja in Korean; fig. 7).¹⁵ As his short-term sojourn to Japan extended into a lifetime away from his native place, Prince Yōng's public image mirrored the shifting notions of Korea's place within the empire. As Korea's colonial experience extended into the 1920s, photographs of the prince (along with carefully selected younger kinsmen who were also forced to reside in Tokyo) increasingly moved away from formally staged portraits to casual images of the prince (and his family) carrying on his everyday routines. While the photos taken on his rare visits to Korea continued to revolve around the theme of upholding dynastic tradition, most images set in Japan focused on the young man's modern bourgeois lifestyle.

An extraordinary commemorative photo of the prince's homecoming in April 1922 marks his first visit to Seoul accompanied by his wife since their wedding two years earlier (fig. 8). It shows the prince, flanked by attendants representing the Japanese colonial state, sitting before the main throne hall of Ch'angdōk Palace. Prince Yōng is engulfed by his very sizable entourage of officials and nobles attired in court dress or, like him, in military uniform. All but three of the women wear traditional Japanese robes. Whereas the prince is essentially indistinguishable from his retinue—his elevated status is intimated by only his front-and-center placement in the photograph—his wife, Princess Masako, draws attention with her light-colored and fashionable Western attire that firmly situates the group in the 1920s. Arguably no photograph in the colonial archives quite so cogently expresses the fundamental character of the colonized monarchy: the Korean prince's symbolic capital owed as much to his dynastic patrimony—illustrated by the architectural grandeur of the palace setting—as to his personal incorporation into the Japanese imperial system. Both of these elements were indeed responsible for sustaining the political, cultural, and symbolic relevance of the Korean royal house within the empire, and together they illustrate why the colonial establishment was so intent on preserving the appearances of the old regime until everything fell apart in 1945.



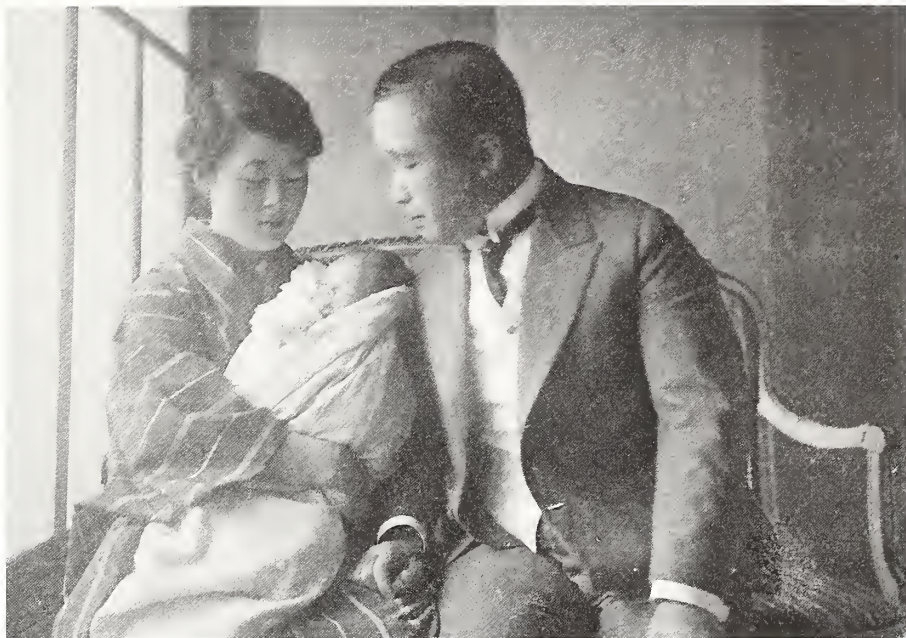
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Prince Yōng and Princess Masako
during their tour of Europe, 1927. Ha
Chōngung Collection 201, National
Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul.

Sunjong died four years after that photo was taken, officially making Prince Yōng head of the Korean royal house. Despite his unambiguously elevated status, the prince's primary residence remained in Tokyo, not Seoul, and the imperial government was able to disassociate him from potential nationalist plots. (Both the momentous March First Movement and a failed restoration effort involving Yōng's half-brother greatly embarrassed Japan in 1919.) The tenuous connection between the throne and its subjects was thus sustained in two ways. One was through the prince's infrequent homecoming visits—brief sojourns that were typically built around ancestral ritual obligations. Far more important, however, were the news items, dispatched from Tokyo, of his notable activities in Japan and overseas. In both cases, photography was instrumental in keeping his symbolic presence relevant to the Korean public.

The Colonial Prince at Home and Abroad

In 1927, just one year after becoming head of the royal lineage of Korea, Prince Yōng and his wife embarked on a yearlong tour around the world (fig. 9). Other than their Tokyo wedding in 1920, this was the most publicized event in the young couple's life, and it recast their public images throughout the empire. At the time, a handful of Japanese officials opposed the tour on the grounds that it could bolster the nationalist cause by drawing international attention to the Korean colony. The trip proceeded as planned anyway, and in the end the carefully choreographed visits apparently succeeded in driving home notions of foreign indifference to the plight of the Korean colony as well as the prince's seeming willingness to support Japan's image of benevolent rule by adhering to his scripted role. At the same time, the hospitable welcome Yōng received from foreign hosts throughout his travels, particularly in Europe, presented him as a cosmopolitan sophisticate. This attitude of princely urbanity was clearly intended to appeal not only to Japanese audiences—who regarded the prince as a civilization mission success story—but also to the nascent bourgeois class in Korea that had emerged in the 1920s.¹⁶



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Prince Yōng and Princess Masako
with son, 1921. Ha Chōngung
Collection 126, National Palace
Museum of Korea, Seoul.

Prince Yōng's grand tour around the world closely replicated an excursion that Crown Prince Hirohito had taken five years earlier, and it marked the apex of a privileged life. For months, newspapers offered details of the couple's travels—places they visited, dignitaries they met, and descriptions of local sites—in a manner that melded celebrity gossip with lessons in world geography and history. Highlights of the journey were recycled in various media long after the tour's conclusion, appearing as a special newspaper serial, a commemorative account presented in memoir form, and even in a Korean middle school textbook.¹⁷ In 1933 the noted feminist writer and artist Na Hyesōk (1896–1948) published an account of her own European grand tour, the highlight of which was an unexpected encounter with the prince and princess on the shores of Lake Geneva.¹⁸ Most important for an empire seeking to promote the idea of colonial assimilation, these accounts offered a way to seduce the emerging bourgeois class of Korea into believing the prince's association with the Japanese imperial court should be their aspiration as well.

The grand tour was a conspicuous attempt to feature the absorption of Korea's royal house into the Japanese imperial system. No less conspicuous was a coeval effort to "humanize" the prince and his kinsmen through photographs of their everyday lives (fig. 10). In a departure from the early phase of colonial rule in which photos presented subjects in stiff formal portraits or posed in ritual performances, a proliferation of images in the mid-1920s presented members of the imperial family as being less formidable and indeed relatable. Such an effort grew out of a growing recognition within the Japanese colonial administration that, to his subjects, the prince appeared to be unrelatable and in some cases even an object of pity. One insightful commentator criticized the royal handlers' preoccupation with projecting an image of "superhuman dignity" and suggested the prince instead be allowed to "act like a commoner" and establish himself as a "friend of the people." His remark unwittingly outlined a new approach to representing the royal house, one that seemingly appeared to strip the institution of its Bagehot-esque magic, but in doing so kept it in the public interest.¹⁹

The Japanese colonial administration, of course, never completely shifted away from presenting the formal and symbolic aspects of Prince Yōng's image. To do so would have been a self-defeating proposition, since the whole point of propping up the Korean royal house was to connect it to the Japanese empire in the minds of common Koreans. Japanese authorities nonetheless paid heed to the perceptive observer's exhortations and began to diversify the messages and depictions of the prince. Instead of offering straightforward imperial propaganda, the new approach expanded upon the hallowed values of filiality and benevolence. It also developed a new repertoire of bourgeois attributes—a "human interest" angle that included images of the prince enjoying domesticity and participating in modern recreational hobbies, such as photography and golf. This did not constitute a coordinated master plan for refashioning the monarchy per se, but it did represent an attempt to respond to the evolving conditions of the times.

Photography of the Wartime Empire

This trend of seeking to humanize Prince Yōng by depicting him in everyday scenes of domestic life came to a sudden end in the late 1930s when Japan entered the Pacific War. The military crisis essentially served as a catalyst for sending members of the Korean royal family to the proverbial "eight corners" of the empire as foot soldiers in Japan's war against China and the West. The expedencies of war also imposed hardline assimilationist policies on the empire's colonies, with Koreans being forced to adopt Shintō worship and to take the imperial oath, to join "voluntary" military and labor recruitment programs, to take Japanese names, and to abandon Korean language instruction.²⁰ The new role of the prince, who was dispatched to the far reaches of the empire to do his part, ranged from symbolic gestures to boost public morale (inspecting schools in Japan or consoling Korean war widows) to offering expressions of imperial submission and loyalty (visiting Shintō shrines in Tokyo and Seoul). Photographs now depicted the uniformed prince in ceremonial pose and on active duty, reviewing troops at the frontlines in China, holding a site inspection in Taiwan, the empire's other significant colony (fig. 11), posts in Manchuria and Mongolia, and delivering field reports directly to military commanders.

In this manner, photography played a critical role in extending the reach of the Japanese empire into Korea. By placing a spotlight on the Korean throne, imperial propaganda kept alive an otherwise moribund symbol of the Korean nation. Capitalizing on a residual royalist sentiment, Japan's imperial government sought to refit the Korean crown to suit its policy objectives, and in so doing, it fashioned a highly recognizable symbol of colonial Korea.



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Photographs from the commemorative album of Prince Yōng's visit to Taiwan, 1935. The Museum of Photography, Seoul.

Reading Colonial Portraits in Context

In recent years, several exhibitions featuring “forgotten” Korean royal portraits have been held in Seoul.²¹ Without exception, each of these presentations was shrouded in an air of melancholy, as it sought to provide a narrative that emphasizes the perfidy of the Japanese empire and the way it used royal subjects for its own propaganda. A closer examination of imperial portraits of the colonial period reveals far more than memories of subjugation. Instead, some of the images illuminate the ways the colonial monarchy participated in the Japanese imperial project. Photographs of the Korean royal family as officers in the imperial army, as champions of Japanese colonial modernity, and above all, as members of the Japanese imperial system offer concrete evidence of how Japan's colonial policies evolved in Korea. In these telling snapshots of collaboration at the highest level, the portraits also reveal the twentieth-century Korean crown as a Japanese imperial construct that was fashioned in full view.

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NOTES

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- 1 Ch'oe Injin, *Han'guk sajinsa, 1631–1945* [History of photography in Korea] (Seoul: Nunpit, 1999), 138–46.
- 2 *Yun Ch'ih'o ilgi* [Diary of Yun Ch'ih'o] (Seoul: Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 1986), entry dated March 13, 1884. Chi Unyŏng, who was also a noted calligrapher, was introduced to photography during a brief sojourn in Japan.
- 3 Photography historian Yi Kyŏngmin notes that the negatives remained in the possession of Chi's family for several generations, but they were destroyed during the Korean War. Chi's portraits of the emperor and crown prince were identified for the first time in a newspaper article in 2010. See Yi Kyŏngmin, *Tonga ilbo*, December 10, 2010.
- 4 On traditional royal protocol concerning iconography of the throne, see Kwŏn Heangga, "Chosŏn hwangje ūi sajin: kyŏnghap hanŭn chaehyŏn ūi kwŏllyŏk sai esŏ" [Photographic portraits of the Chosŏn emperor: Competing strategies for representing a sovereign], in *Taehan cheguk hwangsil ūi chosang 1880–1989* [Photographs of the Daehan imperial family] (Seoul: National Museum of Contemporary Art and The Museum of Photography, Seoul, 2012), 317–20; on the uses of royal photography in Japan and China, see Morris Low, *Japan on Display: Photography and the Emperor* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 11; and David Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera: Photographing Cixi, 1903–1904," MIT Visualizing Cultures, available at <http://ocw.mit.edu/>.
- 5 Alice Roosevelt, who in 1905 accompanied William Howard Taft on a mission to Asia following the Russo-Japanese War, describes receiving photographs of the emperor Kojong and the crown prince at the conclusion of her luncheon at the palace. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, *Crowded Hours* (New York and London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1933), 104. I am grateful to David Hogge for bringing this to my attention.
- 6 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).
- 7 As head of the Survey Bureau for Imperial Household Institutions (Teishitsu seido chōsakyoku) during the critical years of the 1870s and 1880s, Itō served as the imperial impresario of the Japanese monarchy's modern image; see Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 105–54.
- 8 Yi Kyŏngmin, *Cheguk ūi renjū* [The lens of empire] (Seoul: Sanch'aekcha, 2010), 21–23.
- 9 On Japanese settler colonialism, see Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asia Center, 2011).
- 10 Hara Takeshi, "1907–nen no Yoshihito kōtaishi" [Crown prince Yoshihito in 1907], *Shakai kagaku kenkyū* 47, no. 2 (1995): 235–57.
- 11 On Emperor Sunjong's imperial progress, see Christine Kim, "Politics and Pageantry in Protectorate Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 3 (2009): 835–59.

- 12 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 13 Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).
- 14 Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- 15 The marriage, opposed in both Korea and Japan on ethno-nationalist grounds, resulted in a controversial legal revision of the Japanese imperial household code.
- 16 On the emergence of a colonial bourgeoisie in Korea, see Michael E. Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989); also see Carter J. Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Kochang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991).
- 17 A seventeen-part series ran in the *Keijō nippō* [Seoul Daily Report] throughout the month of May 1928; Shinoda Jisaku, *Ōshū gojun'yū zuikō nikki* [Diary of the European visit] (Tokyo: Ōsaka yagō shoten, 1928). I thank Michael Kim for bringing this source to my attention.
- 18 Na Hyesök, “Porin kwa P’ari” [Berlin and Paris], *Samchölli* (March 1933), 38–42.
- 19 *Maeil sinbo* [Daily News], March 25, 1927 (censored). This letter to the editor, perhaps considered too provocative for public consumption, was not allowed to see the light of day, but it was later taken up for discussion by the Government-General.
- 20 Wan-yao Chou, “The Kōminka Movement in Taiwan and Korea: Comparisons and Interpretations,” in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 40–68.
- 21 Recently held exhibitions in Seoul include *Taehan cheguk hwangsil ūi chösang, 1880–1989* [Photographs of the Daehan (Taehan) Imperial Family] (2012) organized by the National Museum of Contemporary Art and The Museum of Photography, Seoul; *Cheguk hwangsil sajinjŏn* [Photography Exhibition of the Imperial House] (2009) organized by The Museum of Photography, Seoul; *Majimak hwangsil, itchöjin Taehan cheguk* [Lost Memories of the “Corean Empire”] (2006) sponsored by the Seoul National University Museum; and several held at the National Palace Museum, Seoul.



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HANDLE WITH CARE

Shaping the Official Image of the Emperor in Early Meiji Japan

Abstract

Photographic representations of the Meiji emperor began to circulate to select government officials in 1873, but their sale in general commerce was banned in 1874. In sharp contrast, the government attempted to mandate the display of *jingū taima*, a Shintō amulet that bore the seal of the emperor, in every household from 1871 to 1878. This paper explores how the early photographs of the emperor and the amulets were distributed within the fluctuating context of the early Meiji years. By considering in tandem two objects that played pivotal roles in defining the public image of the little-known emperor, this article departs from previous studies in an attempt to articulate the roles of the distribution systems in construing images of the Meiji emperor.

IN 1988 TAKI KŌJI, one of the most prolific historians of photography in Japan, published a monograph titled *Tennō no shōzō* (Portraits of the emperor). He examined a series of pictorial representations of the Meiji emperor by focusing on the notion of the “rendering visible” (*shikakuka*) of power relations surrounding imperial images.¹ Taki’s analyses included what came to be one of the most widely distributed and recognized portraits of the emperor (fig. 1). Taking into consideration both the pictorial process of creating this image and the mechanisms of public distribution and collective viewing of it, Taki historically contextualized the actual space and the layers of symbolic meanings that this image conjured in the minds of ordinary people in Meiji Japan.²

My examination takes his pioneering research and its erudition as a springboard for investigation on two levels: materiality and intellectual discomfort. The materiality is self-evident, as this paper incorporates the archival materials Taki has examined. As for the intellectual discomfort, Taki opened *Tennō no shōzō* as follows: “For us, accustomed to seeing photographs of the Imperial family, it is impossible to imagine this, but a photographic portrait of the Emperor in the past was called *goshin’ei* and was seen as identical to the actual person, the Emperor himself. A series of rituals was invented to specify proper treatment of this portrait.”³

Thus, Taki found a point of departure for his project on imperial portraits in the gap that he perceived between their *treatment* and their *uses*. By the time he was writing in the 1980s, photographic representations of the imperial family had long become ordinary and common. Just forty years prior to this study (Taki was an impressionable seventeen-year-old boy when the war ended in 1945), the uses of the imperial portrait, particularly that of the Showa emperor, were anything *but* ordinary. This is one of the critical reasons for which imperial representations in Japan carry a distinct sense of historical disquiet. Whereas the portraits of the

¹ Eduardo Chiossone and Maruki Toshihiro, Suzuki Kazuma, *Meiji tennō goshon’ei*, 1888–89, photographic reproduction of a conte crayon sketch, 27.0 x 19.0 cm. The Alice Roosevelt Longworth Collection of Photographs from the 1905 Taft Mission to Asia. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Gift of Joanna Sturm, 2009. A2009.02.05a

imperial family continue to be reproduced and circulated as commodities in post-war consumer culture, the role and treatment of this group of representations have changed drastically.⁴

This incongruity that Taki acutely senses stems from a rather simple constitutional change. In the new constitution of 1947, the emperor was redefined as a symbol of the state. By contrast, in the 1889 Meiji Constitution, the emperor was defined as being “sacred and inviolable.”⁵ The 1947 constitution thus replaced “sacred and inviolable” with the explicitly nondevotional, but more ambiguous, category of “symbol of the State and of the unity of the people.”⁶ From 1889 to 1945 the photographically reproduced images of emperors became an object of collective reverence, and by the end of the Pacific War many *hōanden*, special architectural structures designated for the protection and display of *goshin'ei*, and the Imperial Rescript on Education were established in public elementary and secondary schools.

It seems intellectual affliction—discomfort—compelled Taki to begin his book by pointing out the incongruous treatment of this group of objects. On the one hand, he distinctly remembered the ways in which the image of the Showa emperor dictated the space and behavior of common people until the end of the war, at a time when he was treated as an image of a living Shintō spirit (*kami*). On the other hand, Taki saw the image of the same person reprinted on calendars and newspapers without the obligatory imposition of any ritualistic behavior on viewers. This, then, is a second point of entry into *Tennō no shōzō*. Just as Taki finds the incongruity of the uses and treatments of imperial representations “impossible to imagine,” I also see the popular uses of imperial representations today as a source of puzzlement in light of the historical functions they have performed.

This article focuses on the period between the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the Promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889. It was in 1889 that the viewing of official representations of the Meiji emperor was coupled with the recitation of the Imperial Rescript of Education. According to historical records, common people in 1868 had little knowledge of the emperor, despite the new Meiji “restoration” of the imperial family as political leaders. What kind of debate took place in the twenty years between that time and 1889? Through what processes were representations of the Meiji emperor introduced to the masses as meaningful objects worthy of reverence? Could such processes explain the successful implementation of obligatory veneration after 1889? And what did the process of introduction entail, especially in establishing, controlling, and cementing a new hermeneutic?

I want to focus on one important aspect of these questions: What did the official government need to instill in its subjects to change their treatment of imperial representations? And how did it do so? To this end, this paper compares systems



2
jingū taima, paper and ink,
 7 x 24.2 cm

of distribution for two seminal objects that emerged in the early Meiji era: photographic representation(s) of the Meiji emperor before 1889, and a form of Shintō amulet, known as *jingū taima* (fig. 2).

Photographic representations of the Meiji emperor began to circulate to select government officials in 1873, but their sale in general commerce was banned in 1874. In sharp contrast to the legally decreed absence of the emperor's photograph from private possession, the government attempted to mandate in every household the display of the amulet that bore the seal of the emperor. While several scholars have examined the historical import of the photographic representations of the Meiji emperor, their work has situated the image squarely within the framework of the history of photography and visual culture.⁷ This article departs from these previous studies in its attempt to consider distribution methods of two objects in tandem, with the fluctuating context of the formation of State Shintō.⁸

From the perspective of our contemporary classification system, the differences between the two objects might appear to outweigh their similarities. Photographs offer visual semblances of the emperor, while amulets render him in a group of Chinese characters. Photographs were located in schools and institutions that constituted the emerging public spaces of the era, whereas the amulets were to be displayed in the shrine portals of private homes. The Meiji government severed the distribution of photographic images from commerce (that is, they could not be treated as commodities), whereas amulets served as commodities that generated income for their producers and distributors. In the received scheme of visual and material culture—the scheme that would, for instance, typically dictate their placement in a museum—photographic representations of the emperor might belong to the department of “portraiture” or “graphic arts,” whereas amulets might fall under the category of “religious objects.”

However, the processes of distribution, rather than taxonomic categories, regarding photographic representations and amulets contributed in creating an *official image* of the Meiji emperor. Here I deliberately use the term “image” in a contentious and ambiguous way. If we follow W.J.T. Mitchell's observation that “image” serves as an umbrella concept under which smaller familial genealogies (such as graphic, optical, mental, and verbal) are located, then it is fruitful to posit photographic representations and amulets as objects that were mobilized by the government to create a particular official image of the Meiji emperor.⁹ In fact, by the time the Meiji emperor was enthroned in 1868, emperors had neither acted nor visibly participated in public life for centuries. In other words, little public material was available to assist commoners in construing any image of the new emperor—be it graphic, mental, or verbal. The emergence of multicolored woodblock prints (*nishiki-e*) that implicitly depicted the emperor just after the Restoration further

attests to the populace's prevailing curiosity and heightened interest about the new political leader.¹⁰ That is, while the popular appetite for imperial representation increased at the dawn of the Meiji era, few images were available in the *official realm* to assist people in construing such an image. Thus, it seems productive to compare the strategies and processes of distributing these official objects during the first two decades of the Meiji era, precisely because the officially endorsed image that these objects aimed to create was contentious and ambiguous.

Shintō Debates in Early Meiji

The historical context in which these objects emerged was anything but stable, predictable, or smooth. As many scholars of religion and history have demonstrated, starting from the last years of the Tokugawa period, intellectuals and activists who aligned themselves with the thinking of *kokugaku* (often translated as Nativism) played a pivotal role in overthrowing the previous government, the Tokugawa shogunate.¹¹ The lasting influence of Nativist thought, especially within the early Meiji structural and political changes, is arguably best exemplified by a relentless if inchoate effort to forge a state religion out of Shintō.¹² Nativists found it necessary, for instance, to order the “separation of Buddhism and Shintō” immediately after the Restoration.¹³ Under the slogans of “restoration of imperial rule” and “unity of government and ritual,” the infrastructure of Shintō and the procedures of associated rituals changed variously.¹⁴

One of the key debates that took place within the discourse of Shintō in the early Meiji period hinged on the question of divinity in Shintō belief and the problem of whether and how Shintō could be regarded as a kind of “religion.” For those engaged in articulating and implementing the Shintō system of thought, the position of the emperor within the conflicting definitions of Shintō—both metonymically and synonymously—was a central concern. The photographic representations and the amulet considered here are steeped in this internal conflict among Shintō ideologues, men who wanted and needed to articulate a new system of Shintō beliefs not only to themselves but also to a general audience that was already demonstrating a keen hankering to produce, acquire, and appreciate such images. Considered in this respect, the photographs and amulets were used as markers of the relationship between the emperor and Shintō thought, and the status of Shintō as a new entity unrelated to, and “uncontaminated” by, Buddhism.

Two problems immediately confronted the Nativists around the time of the Restoration: the anonymity of the Meiji emperor, and the opacity of the link among the two shrines at Ise Grand Shrine (whose inner sanctum is commonly known as *naikū* and whose outer sanctum as *gekū*), the Sun Goddess, and the new emperor.¹⁵ The inner sanctum of Ise Shrine is where the Sun Goddess and the imperial ancestors

have been enshrined historically as spirits (*kami*), whereas the outer shrine honors the protective spirit of the Sun Goddess.¹⁶ Within the ongoing discourse of Nativism, both sanctums at Ise occupied central importance.¹⁷ It is possible, then, to situate photographic representations and the amulet as objects to reorient these very problems, and thus their distribution channels were pivotal to fine-tuning the very image of the emperor that the young government strove to construe.

A case from 1869 points succinctly to how the amulet was deployed to articulate the link among the Shintō spirit, the new emperor, and the Ise Grand Shrine. Just three months after the Restoration, in the third month of 1869, the seventeen-year-old emperor visited the Ise Shrine, marking the first direct visit by any emperor in more than a millennium. Immediately prior to this visit, Motoda Naoshi, a local justice, submitted to the government a list of suggestions for the fundamental reorganization of the Shintō infrastructure.¹⁸ In his list, Motoda specifically refers to the practice of distributing Shintō amulets.¹⁹ Motoda states,

After visiting the Ise Shrine, where the Emperor should inform his Imperial ancestors of the restoration of Imperial rule, [the Emperor] should offer Shintō amulets to other members of the Imperial family as well as commoners, indeed to every household.²⁰ Each family will receive the amulet as the protective spirit of their house, and venerate it. This method would be a particularly effective strategy to spread the practice of Shintō and disseminate the Imperial way. I believe this practice will set an auspicious precedent.²¹

From the outset, Motoda imagined the amulet as an object that would directly link the Meiji emperor to the Sun Goddess. Originating purely from Shintō practice, it was uninfluenced by associations with Buddhism.²² As if in direct response to Motoda's suggestion, from 1871 to 1878 the Ministry of State (*dajōkan*) of the Meiji government required every household to receive and enshrine the amulet. It even built a new factory to mass-produce the amulet in 1872.²³ Printed and wrapped in rice paper, each amulet measures about 7 x 24.2 cm. The centrally located black text in Chinese characters reads *tenshōkō daijingū*, which combines the Chinese (*on*) reading of the honorary name (*nikoto*) for the Sun Goddess with *gū*, meaning "shrine." The central red seal stamped over the text is the seal of the emperor (*gyōji*), which would come to be equated with the seal of Japan. The second red seal at the bottom is that of the head priest of the inner sanctum at Ise Grand Shrine.

Such amulets were not without precedent; their historical origin dates back to the eighth century. Before 1871, these paper amulets served as commercial commodities originating in Ise's inner sanctum.²⁴ They were distributed by religious promoters (*onshi* or *oshi*), who, through associations with particular regional

shrines, sold amulets as well as the official shrine almanac to devotees as they traveled through designated regions.²⁵ Upon receiving the amulet, each family displayed it in the household shrine portal. During the Tokugawa period, the amulet came to be regarded as an object that both attracts benevolent spirits, as if with a magnetic spiritual power, and repels unwanted harmful spirits from the household.²⁶ By the mid-Tokugawa period, this locally and voluntarily acquired amulet, then called “the amulet of great purification” (*oharai taima*), had become popular and was widely distributed largely due to the effort of the religious promoters.²⁷ After 1871 this amulet underwent three major changes:

1. Its names were unified and simplified to *jingū taima*,
2. It started to bear the name of the Sun Goddess, the most significant and powerful spirit of the Shintō shrines, and
3. It was distributed directly by government personnel assigned to each local administrative unit.²⁸

Indeed, when the Ministry of Shintō Affairs (*Jingishō*) was established in September 1871, it was designed to implement the “unity of government and rituals” and more broadly to build the foundations of State Shintō. The ministry immediately initiated the first major reforms of Shintō. Just four months after its establishment, it wholly usurped the historical position of religious promoters.²⁹ In other words, the Ministry of Shintō Affairs sought to situate the amulet as a public and official article by jettisoning and displacing the historically established personal networks of promoters. At the same time, the government maintained the element of economic transaction that had bolstered the distribution of the amulet by pricing it at one *sen* and three *ri*.³⁰ Starting in January 1872, the amulet was manufactured in a new factory built in the town of Uji Yamada, three miles north of the inner sanctum of Ise Grand Shrine.³¹

On April 1, 1872, three months after the factory began operating, an important ceremony took place at the inner sanctum, the very place that enshrines the Sun Goddess, now textually rendered on the amulet. During this ceremony, the head priest, Kitanokōji Yorimitsu, announced that the distribution of the amulet would take place by the emperor’s order. In addition, he deployed the term *daigyōji*, “the official seal of the Meiji emperor,” to refer to the amulet itself.³² Following the 1871 reform, this ceremony linked the amulet, directly and physically, with a specifically identified individual: the Meiji emperor. Significantly, the amulet—now uniformly bearing the name of the Sun Goddess and the imperial seal of the emperor—was understood as the extension of the belief system that placed the Meiji emperor at the apex of its hierarchy.



3

3
Uchida Kuichi, *Emperor Meiji*,
photograph, reproduced in
*Portrait of Four Emperors: Meiji,
Taisho, Showa, Heisei* (Tokyo :
Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1999).

The timing of the nationwide implementation of distributing this amulet was no coincidence. By April 1872, when the celebrated photographer Uchida Kuichi was commissioned to take the first official photograph of the emperor (fig. 3), the compulsory distribution of the amulet had already been implemented.³³ When Uchida returned to the Imperial Palace the next year to photograph the emperor in military uniform, the distribution of the amulet was already well under way (fig. 4).³⁴

In December 1872 members of the Ministry of State (*dajōkan sa'in*)—a legislative and consultative branch of the government—proposed relocating Ise Grand Shrine to the center of the Imperial Palace, the residence of the new emperor in Tokyo. The logic behind this proposal was explained: “All important decisions of the nation should be made in front of the *kami* spirit.”³⁵ In the same proposal, the bureau also suggested relocating two of the three “Imperial Regalia of Japan” from their current locations—a mirror in the inner sanctum of Ise and a sword in Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya—to the Imperial Palace in the new capital. To have all three



4

4
Uchida Kuichi, *Meiji tennō zō*,
1873, wet collodion negative on
paper, 25.7 x 20.8 cm. Henry and
Nancy Rosin Collection of Early
Photography of Japan. Freer Gallery
of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Archives. Partial purchase and gift of
Henry and Nancy Rosin, 1999-2001.
FSA1999.35.R030

imperial objects in one location was promoted as a way to facilitate the emperor's worship of his ancestral spirit.³⁶ While neither of these proposals was adopted in the end, the fact that such a debate took place indicates members of the Ministry of State were keenly aware that the distance—both physical and rhetorical—between the *kami* enshrined in the inner sanctum and the emperor had to be shortened.³⁷ In other words, these proposals were integral parts of a broader effort by Nativists to fashion a state religion out of Shintō and to align the processes of political decision-making with Shintō rituals.

Distribution of Photographic Images

Seen in this context, prohibiting the sale and possession of imperial portraits appears in a different light. In March 1874 the photographer Uchida Kuichi requested access to the negatives of portraits from the imperial household for the purpose of making reproductions and selling the photographic prints. This request

eventually led to the enactment of two edicts in April 1874 and February 1875 banning the sale or purchase of the imperial portrait.³⁸ Analysis of the relevant documents on these edicts reveals that government branches had differing opinions about how to respond to Uchida's request. Tokudaiji Sanetsune, Grand Chamberlain of the Emperor from the Imperial Household, thought it would be permissible to sell and purchase the image widely.³⁹ On the other hand, Sanjō Sanetomi, the Chancellor of the Realm, clearly recognized that granting such permission would necessitate some form of regulation. In neither edict did Ōkubo Ichio, the mayor of Tokyo, provide specific reasons for the refusal, asserting only that the matter was "not granted" and "had already been determined."⁴⁰ He must have known that it is *technically* possible to make and sell reproductions of these images through photographic means.

Considering the two proposals that were submitted by the Ministry of State and aimed to shorten the distance between the emperor and the *kami* enshrined at the inner sanctum, it is possible that the uncontrolled circulation and unlimited promulgation of the imperial portrait could have produced a compromising pattern that actually *distanced* the two, by shortening the physical and symbolic proximity between the emperor and his new subjects. The need to regulate the possession of these portraits, as the Chancellor of the Realm expressed, can be interpreted as a way to control this distance in both its imaginary and physical senses. In fact, in May 1875, Tokyo police arrested a photographer (Horiuchi Motonobu) and his client (Matsumoto Kakutarō) for secretly trafficking in copies of the imperial portrait.⁴¹

Just a month after the arrest, a concerned individual writing under the name "Takagi Noboru" penned an opinion piece in the opposition newspaper *Chōya Shinbun* and objected that the prohibition is rather "strange" (*kikai*). Prohibiting the sale of imperial portraits was nothing but "proof of disconnection between the sovereign and his people, which is primarily an evil custom of the monarchy."⁴² Takagi succinctly summarized the situation, writing, "Because our government is so afraid of the citizens mishandling the imperial portraits, they are, in addition, robbing the wishes of good citizens to know the appearance of their sovereign."⁴³ For him, the government's fear of mishandling is "unnecessary concern."

Takagi also indicts the carelessness of the government's approach by noting the gap in their assumption of "safe handling." Indeed, the government had begun to distribute imperial portraits to thirty-five officials in judicial positions in 1873, and it had extended the availability to any senior official who requested the portraits.⁴⁴ By this time, the government had already begun to distribute Uchida's portrait to each prefectural office as well as to foreign embassies.⁴⁵ While members of the Ministry of State saw the circulation and sale of imperial portraits as extending

the distance between the emperor and the spirit or between the emperor and the sacred space, the same photographs were distributed as an object of veneration to select officials. By objecting to the government decision to distribute it only to “trustworthy” institutions and individuals, Takagi astutely implied that it could not be guaranteed high officials would always and without fail take proper care of the imperial portrait.

The government’s anxiety about how the emperor’s representation was being handled is further illuminated by considering another incident. In the spring of 1872 a British engineer named Kinder, who, in the previous year, had been hired by the mint, submitted a proposal to print the portrait of the Meiji emperor on the new bill.⁴⁶ Kinder’s proposal was enthusiastically accepted by Inoue Kaoru, the Vice Minister at the Ministry of Finance, but it was ultimately rejected due to the strong opposition of the Ministry of State (more precisely, *Dajōkan sei’in*) in October.⁴⁷

In other words, the same consulting body of the government both explored the possibility of relocating the Ise Grand Shrines to the palace *and* rejected Kinder’s proposal. The Ministry of State viewed currency as impure and found it repulsive to create a physical and visible link between the Meiji emperor and the bill. By 1873 members of the ministry saw the clear delineation of the proximity between the emperor and the ancestral spirits and the Sun Goddess as the critical issue, and accordingly, they interpreted the placement of his portrait on currency as an issue that could jeopardize this link. If an image of the emperor was printed on currency, reproductions of the imperial portrait would be uncontrolled and unlimited. At a time when establishing the *practice* of State Shintō (rather than the dogma) had not been cemented publicly, members of the Ministry of State saw quite realistically that the risk of letting the image loose was a price too high to pay. From the perspective of the Ministry of State, the handler of the amulet and photographic representations had to be vetted against the risk of damaging the very image of the new political leader they were construing. One strategy to minimize the possibility of such mishandling was to implement the *direct* transmission of the objects only through approved and controlled governmental agencies.

Within a few years of its establishment, the systematic compulsory distribution of the amulet met with protest and what in the eyes of the government seemed to be mistreatment.⁴⁸ In particular, the True Pure Land (Shinshū) sect of Buddhism received numerous reports that many of its followers were refusing to receive and display the amulet.⁴⁹ Less than a year after the ceremony at the Ise Grand Shrine, the Higashi hongan-ji temple in Kyoto, the head temple of the Shinshū sect, issued an official directive in an attempt to ease the confusion that surrounded the amulet. In the notification, the temple aligned the amulet as part of “the kingly Dharma” (*Ōbo*) or a set of political rules established by the leader

of a country. The directive ends by notifying skeptical members of the sect that the amulet should be installed (*anchi*) in clean living quarters.⁵⁰ At the same time, superstitions spread that the amulet would incite epidemics or start fires among the populace, and reports of people disposing of the amulet began to circulate.⁵¹ More worrying for the Nativists, these reports came from far-flung corners of the country.⁵² This uneven reception of the amulet clearly stands diametrically opposed to the initial hopes Motoda expounded in 1869. In short, the amulet was not serving to “expand the imperial way.”

Today, no picture is as fitting as a representative image of Meiji Japan as is the 1889 portrait of the Meiji emperor, which was later categorized as *goshin'ei*. The prominence, the prevalence, and the frequency with which this image appears in history books mark it as one of the most recognizable and stereotyped images of Meiji society as it modernized. My discussion focused on the period before the image gained the hegemonic power and historical import with which it is now reflexively imbued. By comparing the distribution systems through which the government transmitted the objects associated with the little-known new leader, the Meiji emperor, we come to see the incessant effort placed on simultaneously constructing and guarding his image as a way to define the sphere of his official political and spiritual significance. The failure of the compulsory distribution of *jingū taima* and the ban on the sale of photographic images, moreover, suggest not only the historical discord between the intention of the government and the reception by the masses, but also the physical limit, despite (or because of) regulations and edicts, in consigning a singular meaning to representations, reproducible and reproduced.

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NOTES

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- 1 Takashi Fujitani's analysis of *goshin'ei* practices in his 1998 book *The Splendid Monarchy* as well as other studies in English (see note 7) owe much to these works by Japanese scholars in the 1980s. See Takashi Fujitani, *The Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
- 2 Historiographically, Taki's seminal book can be situated as the culmination of the wave of scholarship that historicized this potent image of Meiji Japan beginning in the 1970s, over a quarter-century after the end of the Pacific War. According to *Zasshi kiji sakuin shūsei*, a Japanese database of articles and periodicals, the number of articles on the subject of *goshin'ei* has increased steadily since 1976. Of the 127 articles included in this database as of October 2011, ninety of them (70 percent of all articles) were written after 1976.
- 3 Taki Kōji, *Tennō no shōzō* 天皇の肖像 [Portraits of the emperor], 11th ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1994), i.
- 4 Indeed, ten years later Taki published *Sensō ron* [On war], in which he analyzes the twentieth century through the meanings and implications of numerous wars. He claims that Japan faced two major obstacles in coming to an adequate self-assessment of the consequences of the Pacific War. First is the exaggerated level to which the citizens felt victimized, particularly after the experiences of two atomic bombs. The second, Taki argues, is the fact that Emperor Hirohito never publicly admitted his war responsibility. While Taki's line of argument is not unique, it is worth noting that from Taki's perspective, the emperor clearly did not feel any sense of ethical responsibility. In the postscript, Taki states that “World War II remains unresolved within myself.” Taki Kōji, *Sensō ron* 戦争論 [On war] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999), 82–87, 200. In 2001 Kinoshita Naoyuki took a similar approach in his essay on imperial portraiture. See Kinoshita Naoyuki, “Shashin to Tōhon—Tenno no sugata to kotoba no baai” 写真と膳本—天皇の姿と言葉の場合 [Photography and certified copy: The case of appearances and words of the emperor], in Nishino Yoshiaki, ed., *Shingan no hazama* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Museum, 2001), 99–117.
- 5 The original Japanese is glossed as *Tennō wa shinsei ni shite okasu bekarazu*, chap. 1, “The Emperor,” Article 3 in the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (*Dainihon teikoku kenpō*). English translation is reproduced in William Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (1868 to 2000), 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 76–79.
- 6 The original Japanese is glossed as *Tennō wa nihonkoku no shōchō de ari nihon kokumin tōgō no shōchō de atte ...*, chap. 1, “The Emperor,” Article 1 in the Constitution of Japan (*Nihonkoku kenpō*). English translation is reproduced in de Bary et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 333–37.
- 7 See Taki Kōji, *Tennō*; Kinoshita Naoyuki, *Shashin garon*, *Iwanami kindai nihon no*

- bijutsu*, 岩波近代日本の美術 4 : 写真画論 [Iwanami series on art in modern Japan, vol. 4: Theories of photography and pictures] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996); “Shashin to Tōhon”; Mikiko Hirayama, “The Emperor’s New Clothes: Japanese Visuality and Imperial Portrait Photography,” in *History of Photography* 33, no. 2 (2009), 165–84; Gyewon Kim, “Tracing the Emperor: Photography, Famous Places, and the Imperial Progresses in Prewar Japan,” *Representations* 120, no. 1 (2012): 115–50.
- 8 Jason Ānanda Josephson’s recent publication offers an evocative new argument against the concept of State Shintō. See Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), particularly chap. 5, “Formation of the Shinto Secular,” 132–63.
 - 9 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7–46.
 - 10 See Taki, *Tennō*, 3–71. For detailed analyses and commentaries on *nishiki-e* prints on the subject of the Boshin war and the Restoration, see Nagura Tetsuzō, ed., *Etoki bakumatsu fūshiga to tennō* 絵解き幕末諷刺画と天皇 [Illustrated explanations: The emperor and the caricature in Bakumatsu] (Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 2007). The proliferation of *nishiki-e* and other popular prints of the Meiji emperor continued during the first decades of the Meiji period and even after the official introduction of *goshin’ei*. See, for instance, Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History, ed., *Ōke no shōzō: Meiji kōshitsu arubanu no hajimari* 王家の肖像: 明治皇室アルバム の始まり [Portraits of the royal family: The beginnings of imperial albums in Meiji] (Yokohama: Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History, 2001) and Niwa Tsuneo, *Nishiki-e ni miru Meiji tennō to Meiji jidai* 錦絵に見る明治天皇と明治時代 [Meiji emperor and Meiji period as seen in multicolored wood-block prints] (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1966). Gyewon Kim offers an insightful analysis of the inspecting gaze of the emperor in travel and representation; see Kim, “Tracing the Emperor.”
 - 11 I use Nativism throughout the essay. The debate over translational and intellectual practice of equating *kokugaku* as Nativism is articulated by Mark Teeuwen, “Kokugaku vs Nativism,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 61, no. 2 (2006): 227–42. This article seeks to think about the complexity that the comparative and political import of these terms pose to intellectual history via specific material objects by focusing on practices to articulate complexity.
 - 12 Helen Hardacre, “Creating State Shintō: The Great Promulgation Campaign and the New Religions,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12, no. 1 (1986): 29–63. Sarah Thal, “Redefining the Gods: Politics and Survival in the Creation of Modern Kami,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, no. 3/4 (2002): 371–404. Helen Hardacre, “State and Religion in Japan,” in *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 274–88. Moreover, the ongoing debate on the topic of “State Shintō” among scholars of the history of religions illuminates the ways in which their nuanced positions have contributed to the definition and interpretation of its historical import in modern Japanese history. I adopt Sueki Fumihiko’s working definition of State Shintō as the “exploitation of mythology by the state.” See Sueki Fumihiko, *Nihon shūkyōshi* 日本宗教史 [A history of religions in Japan] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2006), 186–87. See also Hayashi Makoto, “Kindai bukkyō to kokka Shintō: kenkyūshi no sobyō to mondaiten no seiri” 近代仏教と国家神道: 研究史の素描と問題点の整理 [Modern Buddhism and State Shintō: Sketching research history and organizing their issues], in *Journal of the Institute for Zen Studies* 34 (2005): 85–103; Ōhara Yasuo, Momochi Akira, and Sakamoto Koremaru, eds., *Kokka to shūkyō no aida* 国家と宗教の間 [Between nation state and religions] (Tokyo: Nihon Kyōbunsha, 1989).
 - 13 The movement to initiate the Unity of Politics and Rituals can be dated back to 1867, when Nativist Okoku Takamasa submitted his opinion on the topic of reinstitutionalization of *Jingi kan*, Department of Shintō Affairs, to Tokudaiji Sanetsune, who had been selected as a tentative minister of the department. See Ōkuni Takamasa, “Jingikan hongī” 神祇官本義 [The principles of the Department of Shintō Affairs], in Yasumaru Yoshio and Miyachi Masato, eds., *Shūkyō to kokka* 宗教と国家 [Religions and nation state] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), 3–4. For intellectual historians’ analyses of the role of Nativism as political thought and its effect on the formation of national identity, see Harry Harootunian, *Toward Restoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970) and Susan Burns, *Before the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). James Ketelaar’s work on *haibutsu kishaku* that followed the order of separation of Buddhism and Shintō is also helpful. See James Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Also see Hardacre, “Creating State Shintō” and Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868–1988* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). See also Fumiko Fukase-Indergaard and Michael Indergaard, “Religious Nationalism and

- the Making of the Modern Japanese State,” in *Theory and Society* 37, no. 4 (2008): 343–74.
- 14 For instance, the third anniversary of the death of the Kōmei emperor, the father of the Meiji emperor, was held at the end of 1868. It departed radically from the conventions of the imperial rituals of the Tokugawa period and followed the ancient styles of Shintō ceremony. See Sakamoto Ken’ichi, *Meiji Shintōshi no kenkyū* 明治神道史の研究 [A study of history of Shintō in Meiji] (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1983), 484. Also see Naoko Gunji’s study on the reinterpretation and reframing of Emperor Antoku’s mortuary temple Amidaji in the early Meiji period. Naoko Gunji, “Redesigning the Death Rite and Redesignating the Tomb: The Separation of Kami and Buddhist Dieties at the Mortuary Site for Emperor Antoku,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011): 55–92.
 - 15 It should also be noted here that during the Tokugawa period, the two shrines were known as *naikū* (inner sanctum) and *gekū* (outer sanctum), but in 1872 Jingū shichō, the newly reconfigured governing body of the Ise shrines, issued an edict to rename *naikū* as *hongū* (central sanctum) and *gekū* as *toyo’ukegū* (Toyo’uke sanctum) as a way to add importance to the inner sanctum. *Iseshishi* 伊勢市史 [History of Ise city], vol. 4 (Ise: Ise City, 2012), 198.
 - 16 Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the historical rivalry between the two families who served as the head-priests of the inner and outer sanctums also contributed to the reform of the Shintō infrastructure.
 - 17 The reconfigurations of all shrines into a hierarchical system, with Ise Grand Shrine at the top, was itself the result of national ranking in 1868. Hardacre, “Creating State Shintō,” 43.
 - 18 Motoda served as a judge to Watarai-fu, a temporary governing prefecture surrounding the Ise Grand Shrine area. See Motoda Naoshi, “Ise Jingū kaikaku ikensho” 伊勢神宮改革意見書 [Opinion regarding the reform of Ise Grand Shrine], in Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 10–13.
 - 19 Other suggestions Motoda made include completely eliminating Buddhist temples from his local area, calling Buddhism a “useless practice” (*muyō no chōbutsu*). Indeed, by April 1868 villagers living in the surrounding areas of Ise Grand Shrine were prohibited from chanting or from holding or participating in any Buddhist funerals. Motoda also recommended opening the Ise Grand Shrine to the public. Historically, Ise Grand Shrine had prohibited the public because the space was designated for the worship of the imperial ancestors. For more detail, see “Jingū shosanpai” 神宮諸参拝 [Visiting the Ise Grand Shrines], in *Ujiyamada shishi* 宇治山田市史 [History of Ujiyamada city], vol. 1 (Ujiyamada: Ujiyamada shiyakusho, 1929), 33–52.
 - 20 I supply the subject of these sentences as “the Emperor.” The original by Motoda is written in honorific language for which the subject “the Emperor” is understood. The word I translate as “commoners” here is glossed *fukenjinmin* in the original Japanese.
 - 21 Motoda, “Ise Jingū,” 12.
 - 22 Scholarly and collective attention on *jingū taima* has begun only in the last ten years. Indeed, the first collective effort to unravel the history of this important religious object began in 2003, when the governing body of Ise Grand Shrine, *Jingū shichō*, initiated a collective symposium on this topic. See the special issue of *Jinja honchō kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō*, vol. 9 (2004). The National Association of Shrines has been trying to recast the amulet as part of their national campaign to promote Shintōism. See John Breen, “Resurrecting the Sacred Land of Japan: The State of Shintō in the Twenty-first Century,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 2 (2010): 295–315.
 - 23 I have been unable to locate a *jingū taima* dating from the early Meiji period. I suspect the fact that individuals annually returned the amulets to shrines contributes to this problem. Hence, the image shown here is that of a contemporary *jingū taima*. I would appreciate suggestions from local archives and scholars on how to locate them.
 - 24 The ritual entailed recitations of two major Shintō prayers: *Nakatomi no harae kotoba* and *Issai joju harai*.
 - 25 For discussion of the role of *onshi*, see Hardacre, “Creating State Shintō,” 33–41.
 - 26 It is also noted that some families of the Pure Land sect refused to receive the amulet. See “Jingū taima hanpu no rekishi” 神宮大麻頒布の歴史 [History of distribution of *jingū taima*], in *Jinja honchō kyōgaku kenkyūjo kiyō*, 176, and Mori Takao, *Jūkyō kūkan no saishi to girei* 住居空間の祭祀と儀礼 [Rituals and customs in living space] (Tokyo: Iwata shoin, 1996).
 - 27 A historian of Shintō asserted that the distribution of these amulets during the Tokugawa period should be understood as a resource for monetary gain, rather than being motivated by religious need and desire, although he does not deny the psychological effect that the amulets had within each household. Mori, *Jūkyō kūkan no saishi to girei*, 37. One scholar estimates that 90 percent of all the households in Japan accepted this amulet during the Tokugawa period, but I think this statistic needs further scrutiny, as it does not align with reported reactions to the amulet in the early Meiji period. In

- the case of “ten thousand” amulets, which had been purified over ten thousand times as the name implies, the amulet was encased in a box before distribution. See “Jingū taima happu no rekishi,” 173–235.
- 28 The newly formed branch of government responsible for the reform was designated *Jingū shichō*. The edict on December 12 also unified the designation of the amulet as “Jingū taima.” The unified name given to these objects is another way to address differences between amulets during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods. Religious promoters distributed the amulet systematically and directly from the factory to each prefecture, where leaders of each district contacted each household. For a brief account of the lives of *onshi* after their official elimination, see Nishikawa Masatami, “Ha’ishi zengo no onshi” 廃止前後の御師 [Onshi before and after their abolition], in *Rekishitechō* 24, no. 7 (July 1984): 54–59.
- 29 As a governmental institution, *Jingi shō* ceased to exist in April 1872, just seven months after its establishment. Many of the projects under *Jingi shō* were absorbed and carried out by the Ministry of Religious Education (*Kyōbu shō*) from 1872 to 1877.
- 30 For the first year of compulsory distribution, the government is estimated to have spent from 70,000 to 80,000 *yen*, with an estimated profit of 120,000 to 130,000 *yen*. “Jingū taima happu no rekishi,” 182. The profits yielded 5 to 6 percent of the national revenue that year. The national revenue of 1871 was ¥22,144,000, while national expenditure was ¥19,235,000. See Morinaga Tetsurō, *Bukka no bunkashijiten* 物価の文化史事典 [A dictionary of cultural history of costs] (Tokyo: Tenboshia, 2008), 414.
- 31 Yasumaru Yoshio, “Kindai tenkanki ni okieru shūkyō to kokka” 近代転換期における宗教と国家 [Religion and nation state during the shifting to modern period], in Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 535.
- 32 “Jingū taima happu no rekishi,” 181.
- 33 Whereas *jingū taima* emerged out of a concern for Shintō infrastructure, the initial need for an imperial portrait came from a different set of concerns. Indeed, members of the Iwakura mission traveling through the United States and Europe requested the new government to prepare a portrait of their young leader. See Taki, *Tennō*, 115–17, and Naoyuki Kinoshita, *Shashin garon*, 74. Also see Hirayama, “Emperor’s New Clothes,” 172.
- 34 The similarity of iconography between the first official photographs and the standard form of imperial portraiture in China is immediately apparent. The full-body portrait includes the feet. The emperor wears a hat and sits on a low chair, facing forward in front of an isolating blank background. Despite, or perhaps because of, the emperor’s age, this usurpation of the iconography of imperial Chinese leaders serves to situate the Meiji emperor within the pictorial traditions of portraiture from imperial China.
- 35 The series of debates regarding the relocation of Ise is commonly known as *jingū senza ronsō*. The original Japanese reads *kokka no daiji wa shinzen ni oite gitei subeki koto*. See “Shinkyō hōkan Kyōbusyō settuchi ni tsuki sa’in kengi,” 神鏡奉遷・教部省設置につき左院建議 [Returning the sacred mirror, and proposals by Sa’in regarding the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Education], in Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 24.
- 36 “Shinkyōhōsen • Kyōbusyō settuchi ni tsuki sa’in kengi” in Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 23–30.
- 37 See, for instance, Urata Nagatami, a Shintō priest at Ise Shrine who wrote “Jingū senza tokushitsuron” 神宮遷座得失論 [The discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of relocating Jingū] in January 1873. See Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 31–49.
- 38 See the official edicts reproduced in Tōyama Shigeki, ed., *Nihon kindai shisō taiki*, vol. 2, *Tennō to kazoku* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988), 40–41.
- 39 See his letter to Sanjo Sanetsune reproduced in Tōyama, *Tennō to kazoku*, 39.
- 40 See “Tennōshashin baibai no kinrei,” 天皇写真売買の禁令 [Prohibitions of sales and purchase of photographic images of the emperor], in Tōyama, *Tennō to kazoku*, 37–41. It is noteworthy that in these documents the photographs of the emperor are simply referred to as *goshashin*, which places the honorary *go* in front of the generic term for photography, *shashin*.
- 41 The police confiscated all fifty-five copies of their portraits of the emperor and empress, and both men paid a penalty of seventy-five *sen*, the cost of about thirty kilograms of rice. The cost of one *koku* of rice at 3.88 *yen* is noted by Morinaga, *Bukka no bunkashijiten*, 28. See Omata Noriaki, *Meiji ni okeru fukei jiken no kenkyū* 明治期における不敬事件の研究 [The study of blasphemy incidents during the Meiji period] (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2010), 371–72.
- 42 See Takagi Noboru, “Ronsetsu: Shinei no kin wo ronzu” 論説：真影の禁を論ず [Opinion: Discussing the ban on photographs of the emperor], reproduced in Tōyama, *Tennō to kokka*, 41–43.
- 43 The original reads, “osoraku shomin wo ete sosō wo osoruru yori shikou shite ippan ryōmin no sono kunshu no yōbō wo shiran tosuru kokorozashi wo ubau mono nari.”
- 44 See Tōyama, *Tennō to kazoku*, 43.

- 45 The terms referring to photographic representations of the Meiji emperor vacillated during this period and included *goson'ei*, *mi'eishashin*, *sonnōshashin*, *seijōgoshin'ei*, *seijō goshashin*, *gosatsu'ei*, and *goshin'ei*. See, for instance, entries in Shinbunshūsei Meiji hennenshi hensankai, ed., *Shinbunshūsei Meijihennenshi* 新聞集成 明治編年史 vol. 2 [Edited chronicle of Meiji from newspapers] (Tokyo: Rinsei sha, 1940), 92–93, 111, 135, 152, and Tōyama, *Tennō to kazoku*, 37–43.
- 46 Kinder had previously worked at the British mint in Hong Kong, and this experience fit the bill, so to speak, for the expertise that the Meiji government sought. Kinder stated, “The inclusion of a portrait signifies the king’s love for the people, and also leads people to respect the king, thus ultimately results in heightening the respect for money itself. . . .” Quoted in Taki, *Tennō*, 102.
- 47 Taki, *Tennō*, 101–105. For a fascinating study that explores multiple layers of meanings in Meiji banknotes bearing representations of Empress Jingū, who is said to have ruled during the third century CE, see Melanie Trede, “Banknote Design as a Battlefield of Gender Politics and National Representations in Meiji Japan,” in Doris Croissant, Catherine Vance Yeh, and Joshua Mostow, eds., *Performing “Nation”: Gender Politics in Literature, Theater, and the Visual Arts of China and Japan, 1880–1940* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 55–104.
- 48 There had been a historical resistance from the Jōdo shinshū sect of Buddhism during the previous Tokugawa period. See Matsumoto Takashi, “Jingū taima,” 176–77.
- 49 Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 229.
- 50 Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 230.
- 51 Yasumaru, “Kinsei tenkanki ni okeru shūkyō to kokka,” 535.
- 52 “Jingū taima wo meguru kattou” 神宮大麻をめぐる葛藤 [Struggles surrounding *Jingū taima*], in Yasumaru and Miyachi, *Shūkyō to kokka*, 184–93.

PRINCE CHUN THROUGH THE LENS

Negotiating the Photographic Medium in Royal Images

Abstract

Prince Chun Yihuan belonged to the innermost circle of the Manchu imperial clan. He was the seventh son of the Daoguang Emperor (1782–1850), the brother-in-law of the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908), the father of the Guangxu Emperor (1871–1908), and the grandfather of Puyi, the Xuantong Emperor (1906–1967). Encumbered by his complicated relationship with the Empress Dowager, Yihuan has often been depicted as an overcautious figure, restrained from bold action or self-expression. Yihuan's avid embrace of photography, including collecting, exchanging, organizing, and staging photographic portraits, challenges the passive role history has assigned to him and demonstrates impressive agency. The photographic images of Yihuan, especially those resulting from his patronage of studio photographer Liang Seetay, illustrate clever self-representations as well as a creative expansion of the function and visual language of the photographic medium.

THE QING ROYAL FAMILY'S FIRST ENCOUNTER with photography was traumatic. After the Qing's defeat in the Second Opium War, Felice Beato (1832–1909), the semiofficial photographer at the signing of the Peking Convention on October 24, 1860, aimed his camera at Prince Gong Yixin 奕訢 (1833–1898). Sir James Hope Grant (1808–1875), a British general who left an eyewitness account in his journal, unflatteringly described the response of the prince: "The royal brother looked up in a state of terror, pale as death."¹ Well circulated both in contemporaneous accounts on the war and in recent scholarship on Chinese photography, this incident emphasizes the alien nature of photography in China and its initial rejection by the Manchu elites.² Although Empress Dowager Cixi's enthusiasm for photography roughly half a century later indicates the royals' eventual embrace of the medium, the incident at the 1860 signing continues to loom large in the study of Chinese photography. It epitomizes the interpretive model of photography in relation to the visual culture of the late imperial period. Photography was introduced to China at a time when the imperial power and court culture of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) were in decline.³ The nineteenth century, as scholar Zhang Hongxing admonishes, is often approached as "no more than the infancy of modern China."⁴

By focusing on the engagement of Prince Chun Yihuan 奕譞 (1840–1891) with photography, this paper aims to look, as far as possible without historical hindsight, at photography's early years in China. Yihuan was a member of the innermost circle of the Manchu imperial clan.⁵ He was the seventh son of the Daoguang Emperor (reigned 1821–50) and the younger brother of the Xianfeng Emperor (1831–1861, reigned 1851–61). His marriage to the younger sister of Cixi, the future empress dowager, bonded him with the political interests of the empress, prompting her to

favor Yihuan's son and grandson when the throne required an heir.⁶ Yihuan's prestige guaranteed his access to ample resources, which allowed him to realize fully his vision of what the photographic medium could and should achieve. Moreover, Yihuan's activity remains one of the few early cases with abundant textual and visual evidence of early Chinese photography. More than forty extant photographs—a stunning number in the study of early Chinese photography—are related to Yihuan. They are complemented by the multiple volumes of poetry he wrote, which contain information on various aspects of his life, including his active patronage of photography.⁷

Yihuan has long been portrayed as a conservative Manchu noble who stubbornly rejected Western techniques or ideas. He could not but succumb to the power of the empress dowager and cater to her self-indulgent whims, such as using money originally earmarked for the navy to restore the imperial garden. This scandalous incident, which has long tainted Yihuan's name, was recently proven to be more of an unfortunate public relations disaster of the court than an instance of outright corruption. The revisionist histories of the past decade have also begun to restore Yihuan's pivotal role in the "self-strengthening movement," the first wave of modernization attempts that were triggered by the Qing's humiliating defeat during the Second Opium War (1856–60).⁸ Yihuan has since proven to have been an indispensable force that enabled the most significant achievements of the movement, including constructing the first railway in China, starting the Hanyang Iron Factory, establishing a countrywide telegraphic network, and modernizing Qing military forces. The negative evaluation of Yihuan echoes the overall dismay cast on the last decades of the Qing empire as it reached its nadir, both politically and culturally. A close look at Yihuan's patronage of photography reveals the imperial court's complex relations with innovative technology, which can hardly be reduced to the binary distinction of progressive versus conservative.

The 1886 Naval Inspection

Yihuan had his photograph taken as early as the 1860s, when he was in charge of the Firearm Brigade (*Shenjiying* 神機營), a military division founded to consolidate Beijing's defenses after the disastrous Anglo-French invasion of 1860. Even these early examples indicate Yihuan embraced this medium with full command: he looks straight at the camera and poses with unusual assertion. Later he transformed the print to fit traditional viewing habits by mounting it on blue silk and attaching it to one of his own poems (fig. 1).⁹ Yihuan's earlier photographic activities were limited by the lack of professional studios in Beijing, which did not see a booming studio scene until the 1890s, almost two decades after Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin, and other coastal cities. Although Yihuan contin-

波面殘陽耀碎
金炎光消盡覺
涼侵莫言倥偬
三軍事也得逍
遙一律吟碧草
馬嘶欣脫轡青
溪人坐乍開襟
雲容紅縵隨風
布念切油然而
作霖
醇郡王自題
晚操後步至長河作



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Photographer unknown, *Yihuan with Soldiers*, ca. 1863, albumen print.
Palace Museum, Beijing.

ued to arrange photography shoots and to collect photographs, it was not until the 1886 naval inspection that he had the opportunity to integrate photography fully with his other visual commissions.¹⁰

Appointed Controller of the Imperial Admiralty Board and tasked with building a fleet to replace the one lost during the war with France the previous year, Yihuan visited Tianjin, Lüshun, Dagukou, and Weihaiwei to inspect the coastal defenses and new navy.¹¹ Diagrams, maps, and paintings had by then become a standard component of Qing military documents. Well prepared for the trip, Yihuan had two painters in his entourage—Qingkuan 慶寬 (1848–1927) and Jin Rujian 金如璽—both of whom he had frequently patronized.¹² Upon arrival, the painters were soon joined by two photographers, a German man known as Laixingke 來興克 and the Cantonese photographer Liang Seetay 梁時泰.¹³ Their joint efforts led to a wide array of visual materials in various media, as Yihuan proudly claimed in his report to the throne: “paintings made in the Chinese way as well as photographs made in the Western way.”¹⁴



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Liang Seetay, *Yihuan*, 1886, albumen print. Wharton Barker Papers, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

One major task for the photographers was an ambitious portrait project initiated by Yihuan. It was meant to include an individual portrait photograph of each person who participated in the inspection, from the prince himself and high-ranking officials to the lowly guards (fig. 2). These portraits, Yihuan optimistically anticipates in his poem, “will be displayed at the Han Kylin-Unicorn Hall.”¹⁵ A legendary display of portraits of meritorious officials, the Kylin-Unicorn Hall (*qilinge* 麒麟閣) was launched by the Xuan Emperor of Han (91–49 BCE) and had inspired the imperial rulers of subsequent dynasties. This tradition of exhibiting noteworthy portraits was elevated to an unprecedented scale in Chinese history by the Qianlong Emperor, who commissioned in total 280 portraits of meritorious officials as well as battle paintings in commemoration of his military achievements.¹⁶ This visual extravaganza, displayed at the Purple Effulgence Pavilion (*ziguangge* 紫光閣), greatly impressed Yihuan, who wrote poems to indicate his aspirations for such honor and his nostalgia for the past glory of the empire.¹⁷

Just before Yihuan’s inspection, a similar project in commemoration of the Qing victory over three major rebellions (the Taiping, Nian, and Muslim) was launched by Empress Dowager Cixi.¹⁸ This later project was designed to imitate Qianlong’s undertaking, but with a major difference. Portrait paintings of principal generals were commissioned by Qianlong while the war was still unfolding. The painting project of Cixi’s time was undertaken almost thirty years after the actual events. The loss of eyewitnesses and visual information was keenly felt by the main organizers of the painting project, including Yihuan, Li Hongzhang, and Zeng Guoquan 曾國荃 (1811–1872). Emphasizing the importance of a factual basis, Yihuan suggested painters ask for the opinions of veteran generals in creating a “base composition”

(*diben* 底本) for the final painting. He also required the painters to consult individual portraits or photographs.¹⁹ Correspondence among the three main organizers repeatedly lamented that most key figures of the wars had passed away, and few had left reliable portraits.²⁰ With the frustration of this project in mind, Yihuan revived Qianlong's practice by commissioning photographic portraits be taken at the time of the naval inspection.

In addition to providing records of portraits, warships, and sites, photography also contributed to the ongoing visual productions that celebrated this inspection. Yihuan not only considered the inspection to be a significant achievement of his political career, but it was also a memorable life-changing experience. He claimed that he had often dreamed of himself at sea, but after the inspection that dream no longer occurred.²¹ Reading his dream as an omen of the inspection, Yihuan seems to have welcomed a mysterious undertone to this event. He was fascinated by a mirage of islands that the inspection team encountered at sea, which he instantly related to the famous fairylands where immortals resided. Painters were immediately requested to recreate this fascinating phenomenon.²² Their sketches of the mirage of islands, along with Seetay's photograph of the three leaders of the inspection—Yihuan, Li Hongzhang, and Shanqing 善慶 (1833–1888)—were later adopted as the “base composition” of the painting *Riding the Wind at Bohai Bay* 渤海乘風圖, which depicts the three leaders on a ship in the middle of the Bohai Sea.²³ Combining factual elements from the inspection with pictorial conventions of imperial river tours, this painting enabled Yihuan and his friends to share their honorable duties. The work also alluded to popular literary tropes, such as the Red Cliff, the subject of two canonical rhapsodies by the poet-official Su Shi (1037–1101), who allegedly wrote them after his boat trips to the site with his friends.²⁴ Photography and indigenous painting practices thus worked harmoniously to accomplish the visual documentation required of the inspection, while they simultaneously satisfied Yihuan's personal enchantment with fairy tales of immortals.

The Prince as Literatus-Hermit

One lasting consequence of Yihuan's inspection was his encounter with Seetay, who was conversant about both photographic techniques and traditional visual vocabulary. Seetay was an ambitious Cantonese photographer with the typical background of first-generation Chinese photographers. He initially worked as an artisan in the trade of export painting—a hybrid of Western and Chinese style that was produced in Canton almost exclusively for overseas markets—and later turned to the more profitable trade of photography. After the saturation of the photo studio market in Hong Kong, Seetay moved his business northward to seek



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Liang Seetay, *Yihuan Feeding a Deer*, 1886, albumen print. Wharton Barker Papers, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-132081, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

his fortune in Shanghai by 1871, and he finally settled down in Tianjin around 1876. Within a few years he had won the favor of Li Hongzhang, then viceroy of the capital province of Zhili (an area including Tianjin). Seetay received commissions to photograph important events, such as the meeting between Li and the former American president Ulysses S. Grant in 1879.²⁵ His exceptional ability to satisfy elite clients shone again during Prince Chun's inspection of Tianjin. Although the German photographer called Laixingke arrived on the scene first, Seetay had gained special recognition by the end of the inspection.²⁶ Yihuan appreciated his work so much that two months later he summoned Seetay to Beijing. In addition to taking portraits of Yihuan and his family, Seetay also photographed the prince's residence and gardens. The scanty available records indicate Seetay returned to Beijing at least twice in the following years to serve Yihuan.²⁷ Although their collaboration lasted only a few years before Yihuan's death, Seetay enabled Yihuan to realize fully his visions of photography and further adapt this medium to the familiar ends of elite visual practices.

The most striking photograph Seetay took during his trip to Beijing in 1886 is a portrait of Yihuan, dressed in plain robes, holding a pine branch in one hand and standing in front of a blank backdrop next to a deer (fig. 3). Many scholars have pointed out that the pine and deer allude to longevity.²⁸ What has not been discussed are the two seals: "The Seventh Prince Chun: Riding the Wind at Bohai Bay" on the left, and "Bestowed by the Empress Dowager: His ideas are perfectly coherent" on the right. Both refer to honorable moments in Yihuan's political life, that is, his naval inspection and the praise he received from the empress in the form of a tablet.²⁹ The seals, an indication of Yihuan's worldly honor, along with his deter-



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Liang Seetay, *Portrait of the Owner of Miaogao Mount at Forty-Eight* 妙高峰主人四十八歲像, 1887, albumen print. Palace Museum, Beijing.



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Liang Seetay, *Pavilion Surrounded by Ark Trees* 就槐亭, 1886, albumen print. Wharton Barker Papers, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

minedly informal attire, combine to suggest a hermit who is ready to recede from his worldly affairs.

Yihuan himself referred to this photograph as a “picture of merrymaking” (*xingletu* 行樂圖), a type of informal portrait that depicts sitters in leisurely pursuits. The trend of costume portraits within the Qing court added a new development in “pictures of merrymaking,” in which the various roles assumed by the noble sitters allude to their personal aspirations, novel forms of self-entertainment, as well as political and social concerns.³⁰ Royal patrons preferred the role of the literatus-hermit in a rural setting, surrounded by books, teacups, and other symbols of a leisurely yet sophisticated life. In the following years, Seetay helped Yihuan create a few more “pictures of merrymaking,” emphasizing the prince’s desire to withdraw from his political duties and turn to a simple yet virtuous life (fig. 4).

The image of a hermit was further consolidated by the garden photographs commissioned by Yihuan.³¹ The pavilions, halls, and chambers of Yihuan’s various gardens, all of which carry poetic names, are featured in thoughtful compositions to emphasize the refined taste and lofty nature of their owner. For instance, the Pavilion Surrounded by Sophora Trees (*jiuhuai ting* 就槐亭), one of Yihuan’s favorite spots, appears nestled in the woods on top of a low hill. Its diagonal stairs visually contrast in a lively way with the zigzagged bank of a small river (fig. 5). A temporary setting—a folding table, a chair, and a teapot—was added to the crowded space at the top of the stairs leading toward the pavilion. Close inspection of the photograph reveals the chair barely fits the space, and no one would feel comfortable sitting on it. Despite its impracticality, this addition refers to the numerous poems Yihuan composed at the site, all of which present himself as a hermit in contemplation at his secluded abode.³²

These photographs, with their theme of withdrawal from the world, were far from mere self-entertainment. They contributed to create a necessary image of reclusiveness for Yihuan. As the birth father of the emperor and a favorite of the empress, Yihuan was caught up in an increasingly tense conflict between the frustrated young emperor and the controlling empress dowager, who was unwilling to share her power and who always kept a watchful eye on political forces that might grow into threats. In response to the empress’s inexorable distrust and

envy, Yihuan assumed an extremely reserved persona in his later years. His self-presentation as a hermit reassured those who were watching him. At the same time, these photographs helped Yihuan remain on friendly terms with various political forces. Circulated among fellow officials, the photos often carried long inscriptions and fostered multiple rounds of poetic dialogue, constructing and consolidating a deliberately designed image of Yihuan's social life. Passing informal portraits among friends and colleagues, who in turn are encouraged to write inscriptions that elaborate on the virtues of the sitter, is a long-held tradition among literati-officials. Yihuan and members of his political and social circles actively engaged in this seemingly trivial yet significant ritual of social bonding.³³ Instead of confirming the widespread misunderstanding of Yihuan as a "passive" figure, these photographs instead illuminate his difficult, yet successful, political maneuvering.

"Truthfulness" and "Multiplicity"

Yihuan appreciated photography for its "truthful" representation and the "multiple" copies that could be generated. These qualities, however, should not be understood as universal traits of photography but rather as culturally contingent understandings and adaptations of the medium. Yihuan encountered photography at a time when court painting, especially portraiture, was in decline. Long gone were the missionary painters who had helped bring the techniques of shading, linear perspective, and anatomical precision to the Qing court during the eighteenth century. Also, Yihuan's father and brother did not give the same attention or material support to court painting as had the Yongzheng or Qianlong emperors.³⁴ Portraits by court painters during Yihuan's lifetime, only recently published thanks to the increasing fascination with visual culture beyond canonical high art, offer a glimpse of the prevailing awkwardness of execution. Compared to the Daoguang Emperor's informal portrait, which still demonstrates the technical repertoire of the Jesuit painters (fig. 6), a similar portrait of the Xianfeng Emperor shows a graceless face, disproportionate body, unconvincing gesture, and flat coloring (fig. 7). Created less than a decade apart, these two portraits nonetheless epitomize drastically different stages of court portraiture. Yihuan never explicitly lamented the inadequacy of court painting, yet in 1881, when he was exchanging portraits with General Zuo Zongtang (1812–1885), the newly appointed viceroy of Liangjiang, he gave Zuo his photographic portrait and asked specifically for Zuo's portrait in oil painting in return.³⁵ This apparent preference for such new media as photography and oil painting reveals his dissatisfaction with portrait painters at the court.

The "truthful" representation of photography as Yihuan understood and appreciated it has little to do with the notion of indexicality. In other words, photography



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Anonymous court painter,
The Daoguang Emperor: Sincerely Learning from the Past 道光帝情殷鑒古圖, 1849, ink and color on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.



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Anonymous court painter,
The Picture of Merrymaking of the Xianfeng Emperor in Casual Clothing 咸丰帝便裝行樂圖, ca. 1850–61, ink and color on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.

has a causal relationship with its subject and is therefore a more faithful representation of nature. Yihuan's photographs offer numerous examples that blur the boundary and challenge the hierarchy between photography and other pictorial media. Retouching, sometimes done in a conspicuous effort to imitate brush painting, was far from being a mere technique for correcting or compensating for deficits, such as overexposure or blurriness. In the portrait with the deer (see fig. 3), ink dots were added to the pine branch in Yihuan's hand in imitation of traditional-style painting. Occasionally, even the most symbolically or emotionally laden component in the picture was created through retouching. For instance, the small waterfall—a symbol of prestige in water-deprived Beijing and therefore a highlight of Yihuan's garden—was included in the photograph of Small Chamber on a Brook (*zhenliu xiaoshi* 枕流小室; fig. 8).³⁶

Yihuan repeatedly expressed his excitement over the fact that multiple prints could result from a single negative. He took advantage of this characteristic of the photographic medium at social gatherings. Traditionally these events were recorded in group portraits known as “pictures of elegant gatherings” (*yajitu* 雅集圖). Multiple copies were occasionally made so each sitter could own one.³⁷ Even among elite patrons, however, such lavish production was by no means the norm.³⁸ With the multiple prints of photography, the process was significantly expedited. When Yihuan's tutor Yin Zhaoyong 殷兆鏞 (1806–1883) was ready to retire and leave Beijing for his hometown, Yihuan arranged a group photography session for Yin and his royal students. It took only two days for the prints to be



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Liang Seetay, *Small Chamber on a Brook* 枕流小室, 1886, albumen print. Wharton Barker Papers, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

ready, and each sitter, including Yin, Yihuan, and his two cousins, received a print. In the following days, amid more farewell parties, these prints were circulated and each sitter wrote an inscription. One of these notes summarizes the purpose of farewell group photographs: “Once we gather our appearances together [in the print], there will be no separation for thousands of years.”³⁹ The multiplicity of photography facilitated preexisting modes of visual communication, fulfilling the social purposes of forming and consolidating relations through the exchange of images.

Conclusion

The case of Yihuan offers a rare glimpse of how a royal personage in China utilized photography to cope with his political duties, personal aspirations, and social networking needs. Although almost all of Yihuan’s engagements with photography could be interpreted as a continuation of tradition, I am not proposing a return to a cultural essentialist understanding of photography, for example, by explaining Chinese photography as a demonstration of the quintessential Chinese character, therefore excluding its study from a more global framework. On the contrary, photography became an integral part of Yihuan’s visual world with extraordinary smoothness. Other than being a part of an emerging visual modernity, photography could also be approached as one last manifestation of the Qing capacity for self-revitalization and expansionist assimilation, which was not much different from the Manchu court’s ease in adopting Han literati visual practices. Instead of being an alien intrusion that confirmed the degeneration of late imperial art in China, early Chinese photography could just as legitimately be understood as the display of the robust and accommodating imperial visual culture of the last years of the Qing dynasty. Fascinatingly, while Yihuan often referred to photography as “the Western method of painting,” or sometimes redundantly “the Western method

of photography,” he never used the word “new” to describe it. In Yihuan’s world, unburdened by the knowledge of encroaching visual modernity, photography did not necessarily represent the “new” or traditional pictorial modes of the “old.” His complacency in his cultural universe, despite the mounting demands of modernity, perhaps serves to caution that a truly global history of photography would include not only the previously excluded or marginalized spatial dimensions but also alternative temporalities.

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NOTES

- 1 Isobel Crombie, "China, 1860: A Photographic Album by Felice Beato," *History of Photography* 11, no. 1 (1987): 34.
- 2 Jeffrey W. Cody and Frances Terpak, eds., *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 33.
- 3 As a result, art historians rarely pay attention to the imperial center in the last decades of the Qing. Scholarly attention has been directed to the peripheries of the empire, such as the Shanghai school of painting and lithographic prints.
- 4 Hongxing Zhang, "Studies in Late Qing Dynasty Battle Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 60, no. 2 (2000): 265.
- 5 For a brief biography of Yihuan, see Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 384–86.
- 6 As a result, Yihuan's son Zaitian became the Guangxu Emperor (1871–1908, reigned 1875–1908), and eventually Yihuan's grandson became the Xuantong Emperor (1906–1967, reigned 1908–12).
- 7 Thanks to his attachment to his birth family, the Xuantong Emperor brought the family photographs, including those of his grandparents, to the Forbidden City. As a result, about twenty portraits of Yihuan remain together in the Palace Museum collection in Beijing. See Liu Beisi and Xu Qixian, *Gugong zhencang renwu zhaopian huicui* 故宮珍藏人物照片薈萃 [Photographic portraits in the Palace Museum collection] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1995), 50. Since 1886 Yihuan had established a stable patronage relationship with Liang Seetay, a photographer then based in Tianjin. His studio sold the valuable royal photographs as souvenirs to the foreign community. One such souvenir—an album containing sixty photographs of Yihuan, his residence, and gardens—is in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Yihuan's collections of poetry are reprinted in Yihuan, *Jiuitang shigao*, *Jiuitang shigao xubian*, *Pulan sigao*, *Chuangke cungao*, *Tuiqian bieshu cungao* *Gugong zhenben congan*, *Cuijinyin* 九思堂詩稿, 九思堂詩稿續編, 朴庵四稿, 窗課存稿, 退潛別墅存稿, 萃錦吟 [Collected writings of Yihuan], hereafter referred to as *JSTSG* (Hainan: Hainan chubanshe, 2000).
- 8 For a representative study, see Pan Xiangming, "Lun Chun qinwang Yihuan" 論醇親王奕譞 [On Prince Chun Yihuan], *Qingshi yanjiu* 2 (2006): 97–106.
- 9 The photographer remains unknown. Due to his involvement in the Firearm Brigade, Yihuan frequently contacted foreign military officers to arrange arms deals and to consult on training methods. This probably enabled him to meet those in foreign communities who were capable of taking photographs. For Yihuan's achievements at the Firearm Brigade, see Zhang Nengzheng, "Qing ji shenjiying kaoshu" 清季神機營考述 [A study on the Firearm Brigade of the Qing Dynasty], *Shixue yuekan* 5 (1988): 60–65; Chen Yirong, "Yihuan yu wan Qing baqi lujun jindaihua changshi lunshu" 奕譞與晚清八旗陸軍近代化嘗試論述 [Yihuan and the military modernization of the banners during the late Qing Dynasty], *Xinan shifan daxue xuebao* 1 (1995): 58–61.
- 10 Yihuan also avidly collected photographs—most often photographic portraits of foreign and domestic political figures—from stores that sold paintings, antiques, and rare books. He proudly displayed them at his home and invited his brothers to inscribe their notes of appreciation on these novel items. For a brief account on the

- photographic portraits of foreigners in Yihuan's collection, see Li Guoqiang, "Yihuan cang Qingmo xiren zhaopian" 奕譞藏清末西人照片 [Photographic portraits of Westerners in Yihuan's collection], *Zijincheng* 2 (1988): 10–12.
- 11 The inspection is well documented; see Yihuan, *Hanghai yincao* 航海吟草 [Poems from the journey on the sea] (Shanghai: Tongwen shuju, 1997); and Zhou Fu, "Chun qinwang xunyu beiyang haifang riji" 醇親王奕譞巡閱北洋海防日記 [Diary of Prince Chun's naval inspection], *Jindaishi ziliao* 1 (1982): 1–27.
 - 12 *JSTSG* 1:227. Zhang Hongxing has discovered a colophon on a landscape painting by Qingkuan that offers the most informative account of the life of this banner painter. According to the colophon, Qingkuan was in charge of most imperial art commissions from the 1880s on, thanks to Yihuan's recommendation. See Zhang Hongxing, "Battle Painting," 269.
 - 13 Yihuan, *Journey on the sea*, 7, 10.
 - 14 Zhou Fu, "Naval inspection," 24.
 - 15 Yihuan, *Journey on the sea*, 10.
 - 16 Ka Bo Tsang, "Portraits of Meritorious Officials: Eight Examples from the First Set Commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor," *Arts Asiatique* 47 (1992): 69–88; Tanya Szrajber, "The Victories of the Emperor Qianlong," *Print Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2006): 28–47.
 - 17 *JSTSG* 1:59, 60.
 - 18 For an in-depth study of this project, see Zhang Hongxin, "Battle Painting," 265–96.
 - 19 For Yihuan's letter to the Grand Council, dated November 11, 1885, see "Qing Chun qinwang Yihuan xinhanxuan" 清醇親王奕譞信函選 [Selected letters of Prince Chun Yihuan], *Lishi dang'an* 4 (1982): 35; Zhang Hongxing, "Battle Painting," 292.
 - 20 Wang Jun, "Guangxu nianjian Qing ting gongchen huaxiang kaoshu" 光緒年間清廷功臣畫像考述 [Portraits of meritorious officials during Emperor Guangxu's reign], *Shaoyang xueyuan xuebao* 9, no. 5 (2010): 105.
 - 21 *JSTSG* 2:36.
 - 22 Yihuan, *Journey on the sea*, 12.
 - 23 *JSTSG* 2:86. Unfortunately the painting no longer exists.
 - 24 *JSTSG* 2:86.
 - 25 For previous studies on Seetay and early Chinese professional photographers, see Hu Zhichuan and Ma Yunzeng, eds., *Zhongguo sheyingshu 1840–1937* 中國攝影史 [History of Chinese photography 1840–1937] (Beijing: Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, 1987), 49–51; Roberta Wue, "Picturing Hong Kong: Photography through Practice and Function," in *Picturing Hong Kong: Photography 1855–1910*, ed. Roberta Wue (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1997), 33–37; Edwin K. Lai, "The Beginnings of Hong Kong Photography," in *Picturing Hong Kong*, 54–56.
 - 26 Zhou Fu, "Naval inspection," 15.
 - 27 For Seetay's 1886 visit, see *JSTSG* 2:52, 54. For Seetay's visit in 1887, see Li Guoqiang, "Yihuan zhaopian bazhen" 奕譞照片八幀 [Eight photographs of Yihuan], *Jijincheng* 4 (1987): 8–9. For Seetay's visit in 1889, see *JSTSG* 2:104. The previous scholarship tends to mix these separate visits, resulting in the incorrect dating of Yihuan's photographs.
 - 28 Harold L. Kahn, "A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and the Exotic in the Qianlong Reign," in *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor, 1735–1795*, ed. Juhsi Chou and Claudia Brown (Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Museum of Art, 1985), 288–302; Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits, 1600–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 71–72; Roberta Wue, "Essentially Chinese: The Chinese Portrait Subject in Nineteenth-Century Photography," in *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*, ed. Hung Wu and Katherine R. Tsiang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 257.
 - 29 "His ideas are perfectly coherent" comes from *The literary mind and the carving of dragon*, a canonical piece of literary criticism by Liu Xie (circa 465–circa 522). Empress Dowager Cixi gave Yihuan this sentence in her own handwriting in the form of a tablet as a gift for Yihuan's fortieth birthday. See *JSTSG* 1:310.
 - 30 Wu Hung, "Emperor's Masquerade—'Costume Portraits' of Yongzheng and Qianlong," *Orientalism* 7 (1995): 25–41.
 - 31 *JSTSG* 2:52, 54.
 - 32 *JSTSG* 1:262, 268, 307, 422; 2:35.
 - 33 Yihuan wrote inscriptions for the portraits of many fellow officials, such as Zeng Guofan and Weng Tonghe; his portraits frequently received inscriptions from Prince Gong, Li Hongzhang, and Weng Tonghe. For a few examples, see *JSTSG* 1:81, 110, 175, 198, 313, 384; *Weng Tonghe shici ji* 翁同龢詩詞集 [The collected poetry of Weng Tonghe] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 17; *Weng Tonghe ji* 翁同龢集 [The writings of Weng Tonghe] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), vol. 2, 742–43.
 - 34 Yang Boda, "The Development of the Ch'ien-Lung Painting Academy," in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 333–56.
 - 35 Yihuan invited Zuo to his residence so they could sit together for a photographic portrait. The exchange of individual portraits happened soon thereafter. See *JSTSG* 1:360.

- 36 For Yihuan's pride over the waterfall, see *JSTSG* 1:310.
- 37 For an early example of multiple copies of "pictures of elegant gatherings," see Maxwell Hearn, "An Early Ming Example of Multiples: Two Versions of *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden*," in *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, ed. Judith Smith and Wen Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 221–58.
- 38 One example from Yihuan's time is a group portrait titled *Elegant Gathering of Men Who Received Jinshi Degree in the Same Year 1805*, which took three years to complete. It was not until some twenty years later that the son of one of the sitters, who had by then passed away, made a duplicate in memory of his father. See *Qingshi tudian*, vol. 9, *Daoguang chao* 清史圖典, 道光朝 [Pictorial history of the Qing dynasty, Emperor Daoguang's reign] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2002), 197–203.
- 39 *JSTSG* 1:375; Yin Zhaoyong, *Yin Pujing shilang ziding nianpu* 殷譜經侍郎自訂年譜 [Self-compiled chronicle of assistant minister Yin Pujing] (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1971), 211.



THE MANDARIN AT HOME AND ABROAD

Picturing Li Hongzhang

1

John Thomson, *Li-hung-chang, Governor General of Pei-chih-li*, ca. 1868–72, photograph, reproduced in *Illustrations of China and Its People*, vol. 4 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873–74), detail of pl. II. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2718-083).

Abstract

The limited public representation of government figures in imperial China started to change at the end of the nineteenth century, raising the question of how and why Chinese politicians began to be represented in the modern era. Unusual for the period, the eminent official and statesman Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) was extensively represented in photographs and pictures both domestically and internationally; the widespread appearance of his likeness abroad captures his fame and prominence as a representative of China and the Chinese. Li's own energetic employment of his photographed image, specifically in Chinese portrait formats, suggests the ways in which he crafted a sober, masculine public image for use as diplomatic gifts, documents, event markers, moral exemplars, and tools for public relations.

SPEAKING OF PHOTOGRAPHY in China in the 1970s, author Susan Sontag observed: “The Chinese don’t want photographs to mean very much or to be very interesting. They do not want to see the world from an unusual angle, to discover new subjects. Photographs are supposed to display what has already been described.... For the Chinese authorities, there are only clichés—which they consider not to be clichés, but ‘correct’ views.”¹ In her famous text on photography and its curious ways, Sontag deliberately positions Chinese photography as the other to photography as practiced in the West, noting the former’s tendency to affirm the known rather than explore the unknown. Photography created earlier in nineteenth-century China, specifically photography produced for Chinese use, appears to have operated under similar assumptions. Restrained and controlled, photography of this earlier period also preferred to confirm the acknowledged rather than reveal the unexpected. Sontag could have been speaking of photography of a much earlier date when she notes, “The Chinese circumscribe the uses of photography so that there are no layers or strata of images, and all images reinforce and reiterate each other.”² In the nineteenth century, despite the newness of photography in China, convention ruled its practices and often contained it within a limited range of subjects dominated by the portrait. Nineteenth-century Chinese photographic portraiture, repetitive and reiterative, is notable for its desire *not* to stand alone. Frequently anonymous in both authorship and subject, these images do not elucidate the individual; instead they align with the general and the ideal. From a large pool of intriguingly nondescript and often unnamed likenesses, we might pluck the prominent exception of portraits of the late Qing statesman Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901). Photographs of Li, taken from the 1860s onwards, stand out for their large number, strong public component, and international circulation, and

yet they stay within conventionalized Chinese photographic modes in representing this well-known individual.

Photographs of Chinese officials, in fact, are the portraits most likely to be accompanied by identification of their subjects. Often taken by visiting foreign photographers, these portraits of officials were predictable and popular subjects to be conveyed to curious audiences back home. A famous example includes Felice Beato's image of the young Prince Gong (1833–1898), chief negotiator for the Chinese at the end of the Second Opium War (1856–60). Taken during Beato's 1860 visit to China, when the photographer served as an informal member of the British expeditionary forces, this single portrait of Prince Gong is one of Beato's few images of a Chinese person and perhaps his only photograph of a named Chinese subject taken during that trip. The reason for Prince Gong's portrayal was his prominent role as a representative of a defeated China. As such, Beato's portrait of the prince was circulated in Europe and reproduced in a number of books and magazines, such as the *Illustrated London News*.³

In comparison, nineteenth-century Chinese audiences exhibited little interest in photography as a medium for news and current events. It is difficult to identify any photographic images that moved widely in public view or had a place in the visual imagination of the Chinese public. Some localized exceptions might include photographs (of the new Wusong Railroad or the visiting former American president Ulysses S. Grant) that were sold or given away to readers by Shanghai's *Shenbao* 申報 newspaper in the 1870s, but we know little about these images or how far they might have circulated.⁴ Based on our limited knowledge, most photographs produced domestically were intended for private use and were frequently portraits. The majority of early Chinese portrait photographs that do remain, however, often lack any distinguishing data, such as name, date, or place, thus making their subjects impossible to identify or their original uses and reception difficult to know. In sharp contrast, images of Li Hongzhang are notable not only for their number and variety but also for their insistent identification of the sitter: the minister's portraits are not images that quietly disappeared into the large and anonymous pool of Chinese portrait photography.

Photographs of Li Hongzhang

Li Hongzhang was easily China's most famous statesman at the end of the nineteenth century. A native of Hefei in Anhui, he rapidly rose to prominence, from general to viceroy, and then to de facto prime minister and minister of foreign affairs. His importance in government, the high profile he maintained in China's foreign affairs, and his promotion of China's modernization help explain Li's incredible international renown. For foreign audiences he was probably a more

recognizable figure than any member of the Chinese imperial family. The author of a 1902 obituary appearing in the American journal *Forum* observed that with Li's death, China had lost "her most widely known citizen. The 400,000,000 of China, as well as the millions of the continents, knew his name and something of his history."⁵ This international familiarity with Li and the assumption of his fame is an important component of the photographs. Li appears to have actively cultivated his public image—both in China and abroad—and photography played an important role in this publicity campaign, with the minister sitting for a broad selection of photographers, Chinese and Western.

John Thomson's portrait of Li Hongzhang dating to the late 1860s is unlikely to have been the first photograph of Li ever taken; it is notable for its inclusion in Thomson's magisterial four-volume *Illustrations of China and Its People*, published in 1873–74 (fig. 1). By this time Li had assumed the powerful position of governor-general of Zhili province and was well known to an international audience for his prominent role in controlling the Taiping uprising (1850–64). Arriving in China nearly a decade after Felice Beato, John Thomson (1837–1921) made an extensive visit of the country, traveling along China's eastern coast and ending his trip in the north, near Li's home base of Tianjin. Unlike his predecessor, a significant portion of Thomson's project was photographing the Chinese. Even though Thomson's portrait of Li was among hundreds that the photographer took of China's peoples and views, this particular portrait stands out for being one of the few in which the sitter is named, described, and known. (It is no accident that Thomson began his book with a full-page image of Prince Gong, picking up where Beato left off.)⁶ Representations of Chinese officials may have been a more exalted category in early photographs of Chinese types, but they nevertheless remained a category within this genre. Although Thomson dedicates an essay to Li, he does not completely excuse him from the role of anthropological subject, describing him—admiringly to be sure—not so much as an individual but as an exemplar of Chineseness: "He is now the greatest son of Han and in appearance the finest specimen of his race which it has been my lot to come across."⁷

In accordance with his ethnographic interests, Thomson habitually maximized the information load in his photographs by recording subjects at full length and in their native habitat, all the better to document each person's characteristic appearance, dress, pose, and living conditions. With Thomson's portrait of Li, however, the photographer sets aside his usual quasi-scientific fact-gathering in favor of focusing on Li's face and impressive presence. Another unusual feature for Thomson is the complete elimination of a background that appears to have been painted out in order to silhouette Li's body, thus emphasizing his imposing form and intelligent expression. The figure of Li fills the field of view, and tight cropping allows camera



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John Thomson, portraits of Chinese ministers, ca. 1868–72, photographs, reproduced in *Illustrations of China and Its People*, vol. 4 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873–74), pl. II. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2718-083).

and viewer to nudge into closer proximity with the subject. The image's simple but effective pyramidal composition, use of a compressed space and close-up view, and the subject's self-possessed address of the camera are all characteristics that derive from Western portrait conventions of the "great man" type and were prevalent in photography of this period.⁸ This was not the kind of portrait commonly bestowed upon Chinese subjects in the nineteenth century. Aggrandizing pictorial strategies are absent from Thomson's images of Li's lesser-known colleagues in government whose portraits appear on the same page in the book. Thomson's striking representation of the minister speaks as much to Li's fame in this period as the very model of a modern mandarin as it does to his good looks and personal charisma, qualities upon which Thomson and other Western observers never failed to comment (fig. 2).

Thomson's particular envisioning of Li masks the fact that this portrait apparently originated with versions much closer to the standard Chinese portrait.⁹ Another image that clearly resulted from the same sitting shows Li against the backdrop of his yamen (official's residence) courtyard, formally seated and viewed frontally. The square Chinese chair and table that are essential components of such portraits are present, as is the teacup, another common convention. The highly formulaic nature of this image clearly held valued connotations of status and respectability for the Chinese sitter and also for Li Hongzhang: it is rare to see Li represented any other way in photographic portraits taken in China. The high consistency in composition and concept in the portraits for which Li formally sat suggests the minister's preference for, and perhaps even insistence on, being portrayed in this manner.

The same underlying portrait formula can be seen in another relatively early likeness of Li that was published in *The Far East*, the English-language and Asia-



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Lorenzo Fisler, *His Excellency Li Hung-chang, Grand Secretary of State, Viceroy of Chihli, &c, &c*, 1875, albumen print, reproduced in *The Far East* 1, no. 3 (September 1876). Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

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THE BIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW.

LI HUNG CHANG.

Born in 1821.

THE most distinguished statesman, Li Hung Chang, is a staunch advocate of progress, an enlightened and skilful diplomatist, and a determined enemy of that self-sufficient spirit which has so hindered the advancement of the Chinese people. Hofoi, in China, is his birthplace. After a very honorable career in college, he



LI HUNG CHANG.

was ordered to take the field against the Taeping rebels that were ravaging his native province. As the reward of conspicuous skill and bravery in this encounter he was made judicial commissioner.

Later he became an intendant of circuit and governor of the province of Kiansoo.

In 1862 he first came into intimate relations with foreigners, and co-operated with Gen. Staveley in the defense of Shanghai. He made a close study of this general's methods and recognized the superiority of foreigners in military science. On the appointment of "Chinese" Gordon to the command of the ever victorious army, Li Hung Chang joined him cordially and with becoming deference.

He has opened the Kaiping coal and iron mines, brought about the construction of a telegraph line along the coast of the empire, and memorialized the throne in favor of railway enterprises. He is a man of commanding appearance, being over six feet in height, and having an intellectual face.

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Print after photograph by Lorenzo Fisler, from Thomas W. Herringshaw, *The Biographical Review of Prominent Men and Women of the Day* (Chicago: A. B. Gehman, 1888), 292.

published journal that was illustrated with photographs (fig. 3). It was taken by the American photographer and longtime Shanghai resident Lorenzo Fisler (1841–1918) on a visit to Tianjin in 1875. The acquisition of the portrait was treated by *The Far East* as something of a triumph, highlighted in its advertisements and reflected in the accompanying article's excited description of Li: "No one in the empire [is] so prominent or so powerful as he."¹⁰ The article goes on to note that Li is shown in everyday rather than official dress, as if this degree of informality promises a greater intimacy with the subject or a more authentic look at him. The portrait does not suggest informality. Its adherence to a favored formula is complete: Li is seated, correct, and frontal; the standard props of chair, table, and teacup are all present, although a fan now lies next to the cup. It is apparent that Fisler set up the shoot with great care. The latticed doors and columns of the yamen setting, as well as the square paving stones and straight lines of the formal furniture, all elegantly frame the figure of the minister, and the suggested grid of the composition exactly centers on his form. The squared-off shapes that dominate the image are echoed in the blocky forms of Li's thick winter clothing, merging with his dignified bearing and demeanor to suggest a certain poise and rectitude. Worthy of note is the almost practiced naturalness with which Li poses, looking off to one side and refraining from an excessive interest in the camera. These formal photographs of Li, which required his active cooperation and permission, spread rapidly. The wide distribution of this particular image is revealed in its printed reproduction in books such as Thomas W. Herringshaw's *Biographical Review of Prominent Men and Women of the Day* in 1888 (fig. 4).¹¹

With time, images of Li continued to multiply; no other Chinese official seems to have attained the same level of recognition nor accumulated photographic



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Liang Shitai (See Tay), *Portrait of Li Hongzhang*, 1878, albumen print. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2006.R.1.4).

portraits in the same quantities as he did. Li also sat for Chinese photographers, including for his 1879 portrait by See Tay or Liang Shitai 梁時泰 (fig. 5). Liang began his career in Hong Kong before he moved north to Shanghai and then to Tianjin, where this image was taken. Active in the 1870s and 1880s, Liang Shitai is known to have later produced portraits of members of the imperial court, but his portrait of Li Hongzhang represents an early example of Liang's unusual adaptation of Chinese pictorial practices to photography. This portrait is consistent with much of Chinese photographic portraiture in its familiar arrangements and presentation of the sitter. Here, Li appears especially formal, wearing the full summer regalia of court robe, court necklace and rank badge, and official hat replete with finial and feather. All of these details point to Li's identity as an extremely high-ranking official; a pot of flowers and case of books join the teacup on the table, with the open book atop the stack contributing one more standard allusion to the sitter's elite status and learning.

Despite these stock components, this portrait looks quite different from the images taken by Thomson and Fisler in that Liang Shitai made choices that enhance the photograph's identity as a Chinese image of a Chinese subject. This can be seen in the striking and emphatic tonality of the photograph, a tonality analogous with the modulated ink gradations found in a Chinese painting. The objects in the photograph, whether wood, cloth, paper, flesh, or porcelain, are subtly rendered by a moody array of shades and contrasts, rather than by modeling, light, or texture.



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Print after Liang Shitai (See Tay),
General Grant, and Li Hong Chang,
Chinese Grand Secretary of State
and Viceroy of Chih-Li, reproduced
in *Harper's Weekly*, October 4,
1879, p. 784.

Shade and tone organize the image's meaning, with its deepest and plummiest tones on the perimeter. The brightest whites and greatest contrasts are reserved for the center of the image and the figure of Li. As can be seen in other photographs by Liang, he was not afraid to enhance his photographs manually. Numerous details have been punched up and touched up by hand, from the little flowers added to the potted plant to the pristine details of Li's dress, namely, his boots, hat and finial, robe skirt, and even his rank badge, which appears to have been entirely painted in. These additions heighten the tonal contrasts and draw the eye to significant areas of the image. The most obvious area of photographic manipulation is the unusual inclusion of an inscription that is integrated directly into the image. Such inscriptions are seldom seen in photography of this period, although it is obviously a standard practice in painting.¹² Impersonal and precise, the inscription's neat calligraphy strikes a public note by labeling the image with the date, season, location, and Liang's authorship. Liang Shitai's willingness to alter aspects of his photographs freely is here focused on enhancing Li Hongzhang's status. The retouched details of his dress, most notably the bright hat and glowing rank badge, all speak directly to Li's eminent position, and at the same time they visually bracket his immediately recognizable face.

The assertion of the emphatically "Chinese" aspects of this image, the deep tones and high contrasts, and the heavy retouching all lend the portrait a compelling gravitas and formality. The image's grand iconicity also raises the question of audience. Other unusual aspects of the image, such as the asymmetric pose and his sudden turn to the side, lend the portrait a sense of dynamism that is more common in Western portraits. This asymmetry can also be explained by the fact that the photograph is one of several to emerge from a posing session Li shared with the former American president Ulysses S. Grant during the general's visit to China in 1879. (Grant is seated to Li's right.) The double portrait of both men from this posing session circulated outside China and was reproduced in *Harper's Weekly* (fig. 6). Li was known to have given copies of his portrait by Liang Shitai to foreign visitors.

Liang Shitai's prominent use of Chinese pictorial conventions in these and later portraits was perhaps one way he could accommodate his high-ranking



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Charles Léandre, *Li-Hung-Chang*,
vice-roi du Petchili, lithograph,
cover of *Le Rire* (no. 302), August
18, 1900. Freer Gallery of Art
and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

sitters. His strategy to coordinate photography with or elevate it to match an older use of images is particularly understandable in Liang's later associations with members of the imperial court. At the same time, the employment of a self-consciously Chinese photographic style was deliberate in more ways than one and suggests the photographer's awareness of the image's international audiences. The curious example of Li's portrait with Grant underscores just how unusual such an image was, and it presents the unprecedented problem of placing a Chinese head of state together with a (former) foreign head of state of roughly equal rank. Liang's double portrait resolves the problem on Chinese terms by simply doubling the composition of the gentleman's formal photograph and twinning the two figures in pose, demeanor, and teacups. By the standards of Chinese photography, the image is satisfyingly consistent in the clarity of its strict visual and hierarchical symmetry.¹³

The Minister Abroad

The three photographs discussed here are only a fraction of the many photographs taken of Li with his direct cooperation. Although all of them were taken in China, their appearance in Western media outlets suggests Li's own part in distributing his image, as well as a strong and ongoing interest in him on the part of international audiences. Li's photographic portraits are far from the only images circulated of the minister. Other pictures of him in the form of cartoons, drawings, illustrations, advertisements, and eventually even newsreels were widespread, indicating a worldwide fascination with one of the few Chinese individuals of international renown.¹⁴ Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that they also reflect an interest in Li as an example of Chineseness and China. Certainly photographs of Li seldom waiver from his identity as a Chinese official and an elite Chinese male. His many international images rarely represent him otherwise, although the connotations of this particular role could play out quite differently outside China. For example, Li appears once again in the dress of a Chinese official in one cartoon from the cover of the French humor magazine *Le Rire* (fig. 7), but in this case he is also shown with an outlandish leer, his squinting features and exaggerated facial hair obviously referring to racialized stereotypes and clichés relating to the Chinese, and to Li Hongzhang as their representative, in foreign eyes. Despite these distortions, the magazine cover remains recognizably based on Li's actual appearance, depicting the scholar's cap with medallion he often wore in later life and even his damaged left eye, the souvenir of an assassination attempt made on the viceroy in Japan in 1895.¹⁵

A tendency to equate crudely the figure of China's leading politician with common perceptions of Chinese character and identity is also suggested in a 1900 *Life*



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James Ricalton, *Li Hung Chang, China's greatest Viceroy and Diplomat* (photographed in his Yamen, Tientsin, China, Sept. 27, 1900), 1900, from *China Through the Stereoscope*, stereoview, published by Underwood and Underwood. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2003.R.22).

magazine sketch of Li as a Chinese laundryman. This sketch, titled “What might have been if Li Hung Chang had been born of different parents,” also incorporates Li’s familiar features. Perhaps for the average American this was the most comprehensible and familiar role of the “Chinaman.”¹⁶ If we return once again to photography, an image of Li, taken in 1900 toward the end of his life by James Ricalton (1844–1929) for the American stereoscope company of Underwood and Underwood, shows the minister still to be a representative monument of China and the Chinese, and as one more anticipated sight on the Western armchair traveler’s hundred-image tour of *China Through the Stereoscope* (fig. 8). Although taken forty years after Beato’s Opium War series, the terms of photography of China appears little changed, with Li Hongzhang remaining as only one of two named Chinese sitters in Ricalton’s series of stereoviews.

The Minister at Home

Another feature of photography that remains unchanged is that in this portrait, taken when Li was aged seventy-seven and just a year before his death, he still did not relinquish the trappings of a formal sitting, his usual recognizably Chinese mode of self-presentation, or even his teacup.¹⁷ After all, photographs of the minister, unlike cartoons and illustrations, remained dependent on Li’s willingness to be photographed. Throughout his career, Li not only submitted to being photographed frequently, but he also appeared to have put photography to a number of uses. For example, he often gave his inscribed portraits to foreign visitors as mementos of their encounter. These visitors could include everyone from important diplomats and the wives of foreign acquaintances to American students bicycling through China.¹⁸ Two students, Thomas Gaskell Allen and William Lewis Sachtleben, describe visiting the viceroy in Tianjin and admiring his Western-style reception room for visitors, ornamented with photographs of himself and other international figures. Their book reproduces “a photograph sent to the authors by the Prime Minister,” showing Li in his familiar mode of the elite Chinese gentleman, seated and wearing a scholar’s robe and holding a large round fan (fig. 9).¹⁹ Ulysses Grant’s son, Frederick D. Grant, in an 1896 essay also described Li’s



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Anonymous, *Li-Hung-Chang*, frontispiece illustration based on a photograph, from Thomas Gaskell Allen, Jr., and William Lewis Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle: The Journey of Two American Students from Constantinople to Peking* (New York: Century Company, 1897).

fondness for photography. He recalled the Grants' visit to China in 1879: "Li Hung Chang took the greatest pleasure in having his photograph taken with my father's [*sic*], on various occasions; the collecting of these photographs became, in fact, quite a fad of his."²⁰

Obviously conversant with Euro-American social rituals of the photograph, Li's interests in photography can easily be understood in those terms. They were gifts that served as souvenirs, images employed to forge personal connections and to generate publicity; photography was even pursued as a pleasant pastime. However, while Li's photographic image may have been thus deployed when engaging with Western acquaintances, how photographs of Li were used and understood at home and in a Chinese context is far less certain. At the very least, it seems unlikely that a domestic audience perceived the pictures of Li as personifications of China or the Chinese. Sidestepping his more controversial reputation at home, it is useful to ask what purposes photographs of Li *could* serve when the photographic portrait in China apparently had a rather limited public application. How was the public figure or celebrity viewed in China at that time? Although the concept of fame is far from a new one in China and has its own history, its exact mechanisms and conceptualization in this period remain unclear. The uniqueness of Li's many images are apparent when considering the numerous anonymous nineteenth-century Chinese portraits that survive. We can note their detachment from fixed identities and again ask why this is so. Even the few "public" images that perhaps

began as portraits of contemporary celebrities—and here, I think of photographs depicting courtesans and actors that circulated in the late Qing—have over time lost identifying features, such as name, date, and place. This gives these images a lack of specificity and a curious facelessness that apparently flies in the face of their very purpose.

In the 1901 article “Photography in China,” the American missionary Isaac Taylor Headland (1859–1942) casually hints at Chinese uses of photography toward the end of the Qing dynasty. Headland’s observations on photography in China are marked by his impatience with what he sees as its clichéd and limited qualities, which he disapprovingly attributes to a Chinese lack of both imagination and artistry. Although Headland’s condescending judgments give little insight into the contemporary meanings of photography for Chinese audiences, he does offer raw data on the kinds of Chinese photographs that were available for sale at this time as well as information on Chinese photographic practices. For example, he notes the continued conventionality of Chinese portraiture in this period, pointing out “that ever-present centre-table, tea-cup, water-pipe and pot of flowers beside every subject,” particularly in relationship to images of public figures. (He specifically mentions photographs of “Li Hung-chang” and “K’ang Yu-wei, the reformer.”) He sighs over their usual representation in “a straight, stiff position—hands on knees, legs spread apart, and a monotonous line extending from the middle of the forehead to a point between the feet.” Intriguingly, Headland contrasts these images with what he sees as the more innovative photographs of “theatrical performers and public prostitutes.” While the first group assumes “this monotony of position which in the Chinese mind is associated with dignity,” Headland admires the drive toward diversity in images of actors and prostitutes, originating, he suggests, in the desire to capture these subjects “in all their various attitudes.”²¹ The quite different visual principles by which an actor’s photograph operated in comparison to photographs of Li Hongzhang are reminders of the limited traditions of visualizing the government official or political power. Public representations of the state and its power were not predicated on figural images, much less on images of the individual. We can even generalize and point out the longstanding and powerful absence of public pictures of the emperor or his officials who thus disappeared into their roles. Visually, at least, power was not dependent on the ability to be seen.²²

In comparison, the possibility of seeing entertainers “in all their various attitudes” was not at all incidental to such subjects’ social marginalization. This easy availability to anyone who cared to pay and look defined their fascination and their social roles. Furthermore, these roles did not depend on their individuality, but they did rely on being seen. Visual variety becomes a metaphor for desire and access, concepts that surely transcended the identities of particular individuals,

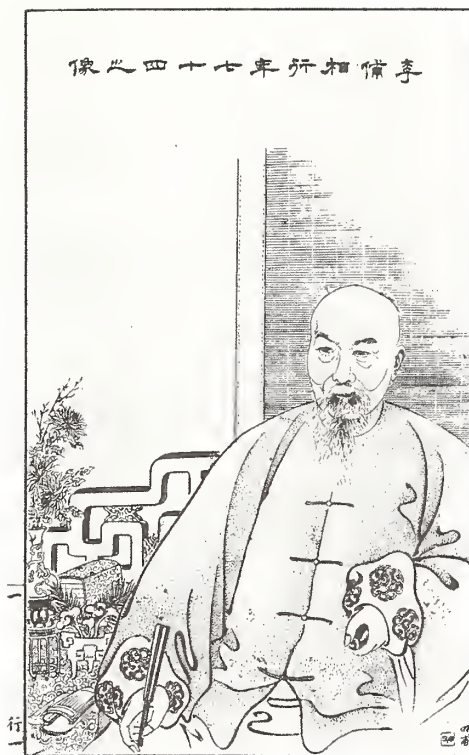
for these performers disappeared into the parts they played. In this light, Li Hongzhang's willingness literally to be in the public eye may seem all the more intriguing and even contradictory. His public visibility, however, was predicated on quite different assumptions and models than that of the public performer.

Here we turn to the cynical Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) and his childhood memories of the local photography studio in Shaoxing.

Hanging on the wall were framed photographs of the great Zeng Guofan, Minister Li Hongzhang, General Zuo Zongtang, and Commander Bao. A well-intentioned elder from my clan once used these photographs to offer me moral instruction. “These men,” he said, “were all great officials of the day, distinguished public servants who had suppressed the Long Hair rebellion [Taiping Rebellion, 1850–64], you should follow their example.” At that time I was keen to follow their example; yet I thought that for this to be possible, there had better soon be another Long Hair rebellion.²³

Lu Xun's sarcastic account of a provincial photography studio pokes fun not only at his own childish naiveté but also at the laughable notion of the Qing official serving as any kind of viable role model in a new and complicated age.

The enshrinement of Li and other prominent officials in the public setting of the photo studio clearly suggests an updated version of portrait collections of historical moral exemplars. If one convention for images of the powerful was in circulation, it was the longstanding didactic tradition of portraits of meritorious officials and paragons of virtue. During the late Qing, this practice continued in the form of popular illustrations of famous generals.²⁴ Such traditions assist in explaining the remarkable consistency of Li's portraits, which comes into tighter focus if considered in the light of potential moral models. Images of Li, as we have seen, consistently cleaved to the formula of the Chinese portrait, always representing him in his identity as an official and elite Chinese gentleman formally presented to the viewer. A final example of this is a portrait of Li published in the Shanghai pictorial *Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報 in 1896, the year of his world tour when Li was age seventy-four (fig. 10).²⁵ In his lithograph, the illustrator He Mingfu 何明甫 has faithfully followed an original bust-length photograph in recording Li's features. The rest of the image is invented, yet it continues to cling to photographic convention. In it Li holds the typical accoutrements of snuff bottle and fan; a still life has been squeezed into a corner of the image, including a tripod holding *lingzhi* fungi, a vase of chrysanthemums, and a case of books with a single volume open. Li once more is shown as the elite gentleman, circled by standard allusions of auspiciousness and status.



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He Mingfu, *Portrait of Teacher and Grand Councilor Li at Age 74*, lithograph, *Dianshizhai huabao*, 1896.

The persistence of this formula can be attributed to its amazing capaciousness as the most potent of Chinese male cultural roles. It also explains the striking anonymity of the Chinese portrait. The image does not showcase, unveil, or reveal the individual; rather, the individual merges into the greater role. This visual formulation is no less based on type and stereotype than are Western images of the mandarin. The particular force and associations of the cultural status of the elite Chinese man, however, does not so much limit and box in the individual as it visually assimilates him into a stratosphere of privilege, prestige, and prerogative. These are images not about being seen but about being known. To return to Sontag, the pictures are not clichés but “correct” views. The fact that Li’s image could circulate so widely, domestically and internationally, is a testament to how this visual formula of the Chinese official was comprehensible to multiple audiences, albeit in different ways. In photography, this restrained, sober, masculine, and stereotyped iconography of the elite Chinese male, with all its longstanding associations of power and cultural capital, could be neatly co-opted for the newly required imagery of the Chinese statesman.²⁶

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NOTES

- 1 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1973), 173. Sontag discusses both the public propaganda photography and private family photography she saw on a 1973 trip to China. She further discusses her visit to China and elaborates on Chinese uses of photography in *Photography within the Humanities*, ed. Eugenia Parry Janis and Wendy MacNeil (Danbury, NH: Addison House Publishers, 1977), 120.
- 2 Sontag, *On Photography*, 175.
- 3 For a recent discussion of this portrait, see Anne Lacoste, *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 10.
- 4 See Rudolf Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*," in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910*, ed. Rudolf Wagner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 112, 120. Wagner states *Shenbao* gave away ten thousand photographs of Ulysses Grant in 1879.
- 5 Gilbert Reid, "Li Hung Chang: A Character Sketch," *Forum* 32, no. 6 (February 1902): 723.
- 6 An account of Thomson's visit with Li Hongzhang is given by Edward Parker, a British official and assistant to Sir Thomas Wade, the British minister in Beijing. According to Parker, the visit did not go well. See Edward H. Parker, *John Chinaman and A Few Others* (London: John Murray, 1901), 165–66. Also see Richard Ovenden, *John Thomson (1837–1921) Photographer* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland and The Stationery Office, 1997), 20. Ovenden notes that Thomson's portrait of Li was also reproduced in "Li Hung Chang," *Strand Magazine* 12 (July–December 1896): 317.
- 7 John Thomson, "Li-Hung-Chang," in *Illustrations of China and Its People*, vol. 4 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873–74), pl. II. Also see Allen Hockley's discussion of Thomson's representation of Li Hongzhang and other Chinese officials in his essay "John Thomson's China—I" on MIT's *Visualizing Cultures* website http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/john_thomson_china_01/ct_essay04.html, accessed March 20, 2012.
- 8 Photographs by the French photographer Nadar (1820–1910) in his gallery of famous individuals, for example, almost uniformly employ a half-length view of the sitter. A similar half-length image of a seated and regal Li Hongzhang, taken in Paris, is in the collection of the Shanghai Municipal Library. See *Shanghai tushuguan cang lishi yuanzhao* 上海图书馆藏历史原照 [Original historical photos in the Shanghai Library Collection], vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007), 252. This volume includes a selection of photographs of Li dating to his 1896 tour of Europe and the United States.
- 9 This alternate version of Thomson's portrait of Li is little known but appears in Chester Holcombe, "Li Hung Chang: Personal Observations and Recollections of his Achievements in [sic] Behalf of China," *McChure's Magazine* 7, no. 5 (October 1896): 428. Holcombe, a missionary and diplomat, subtitled the image "Li Hung Chang in his own house at Tientsin, 1872," adding afterwards, "From a copyrighted photograph by John Thomson, F.R.G.S., London." Holcombe's article includes several photographs of Li, including images by George Curzon and Liang Shitai.
- 10 "The portrait we present to our readers was taken by Mr. L. F. Fisler when he was in the north last year, and will be all the

- more interesting as showing the great man as he is in every-day life, and not in any official costume"; *The Far East* 1, no. 3 (September 1876): 75.
- 11 Thomas W. Herringshaw, *The Biographical Review of Prominent Men and Women of the Day* (Chicago: A. B. Gehman, 1888), 292.
 - 12 The two versions of this photograph known to me—one is in the Library of Congress and one is in the Getty Research Institute—display different inscriptions; only the photograph in the Library of Congress bears Li's name.
 - 13 The copy of this portrait in the Library of Congress was given to the American traveler George T. Bromley and reproduced in *The Wave* 14, no. 38 (January–December 1896): 6. The double portrait with Grant appeared in print form in *Harper's Weekly*, where it is attributed to See Tay and described as being an "excellent picture" and "noteworthy as a specimen of Chinese skill in the art of photography as well as for the truth of the likeness." See *Harper's Weekly* (October 4, 1879), 784. Other versions of this image have been doctored and show changed details, such as a different vase and flowers. The Chinese Steamship Navigation Company, an enterprise of which Li Hongzhang was an important supporter, was known to have given away copies of Liang Shitai's 1888 album of images of Prince Chun. The album in the collection of the Library of Congress arrived in the papers of Wharton Barker (1846–1921), who had business interests in China at the end of the Qing. See the essay "Prince Chun through the Lens" by Yi Gu in this volume.
 - 14 It would be impossible to list the many images of Li that can be seen in Western magazines and newspapers as well as in several books published on the minister and his life, in addition to the numerous images of Li that appear in nineteenth-century Japanese woodblock prints and news images. The images produced of Li in the Western press during such major events as his 1896 tour of Europe and America not surprisingly show him on different terms than in the portraits for which he agreed to sit. Interestingly, his visit gave rise to a number of advertisements and images in other media. Examples include the tea-crate label for "The Viceroy" brand of tea in the collection of the Peabody Museum, which was obviously based on a photograph of Li Hongzhang (the label includes the original inscription in Chinese, which is dated 1897), and the 1890s advertisement for the *New York Journal* in the collection of the Library of Congress, which shows a cartoon of Li reading the newspaper with the tagline "Li Hung Chang never misses the Sunday *Journal*." Li also appears in very early newsreels or "actualities." Two films produced by the Biography Company in August 1896 record Li's arrival at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City and his visit to Grant's tomb.
 - 15 The cartoon is by Charles Léandre and titled "Li-Hung-Chang, vice-roi du Petchili"; see *Le Rire* 7, no. 302 (August 18, 1900). Many thanks to David Hogge for sharing this image.
 - 16 For the sketch signed "W. Read," see *Life* (January 19, 1900): 47.
 - 17 Ricalton took a number of pictures of Li Hongzhang that appear in stereoview form, including several formal portraits and an image of Li in his official chair. The best known, sometimes numbered 67 in the series, is titled "Li Hung-chang, China's greatest Viceroy and Diplomat, photographed in his Yamen (Sept. 27, 1900)." In his travelogue, Ricalton describes arranging the visit and the photographing session through various connections and of servants setting up the furniture and other details in the yamen courtyard. See Christopher J. Lucas, *James Ricalton's Photographs of China During the Boxer Rebellion: His Illustrated Travelogue of 1900* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 184–88.
 - 18 For example, the American inventor and expatriate Hiram Stevens Maxim (1840–1916), in his book *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-Book* (an antimissionary tract that Maxim suggested also represented Li's own views), reproduces a photograph Li gave to Lady Maxim, presumably during Li's visit to Europe in 1896. This photograph, neatly framed on two sides with an inscription that includes a selection of Li's official titles, is dated to the summer of 1896. Almost every book published in English on Li featured a photograph of the viceroy. See *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-Book* (London: Watts, 1913), preface photograph.
 - 19 Thomas Gaskell Allen, Jr., and William Lewis Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle: The Journey of Two American Students from Constantinople to Peking* (New York: Century Company, 1897), 223. According to Allen and Sachtleben, Li's "foreign reception room" was the only one in China, and it featured "portraits of Li-Hung-Chang himself, Krupp the gun-maker, Armstrong the ship-builder, and the immortal 'Chinese Gordon.'" This portrait and the majority of photographic portraits that were inscribed and given to visitors follow Chinese portrait conventions and are often unsigned. I assume that many of these are by Chinese photographers, although one exception is the 1896 vignetted bust portrait of Li by the French photographer Eugène Pirou (1841–1909). See Raymond Lum, "Archival Collections of Asia Photographs: Asia

- Photographs at Harvard," *Trans-Asia Photography Review* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2012).
- 20 Frederick D. Grant, "Li Hung Chang and General Grant," *Outlook* 54, no. 9 (August 28, 1896): 367–71. Grant observed that Li would daily arrange a grand state function in his father's honor and "during each entertainment, he had a photograph made of himself and my father together, occasionally honoring the rest of the company by including them in the picture."
 - 21 Isaac Taylor Headland, "Photography in China," *British Journal of Photography* (December 27, 1901): 822–23. Many thanks to Terry Bennett for pointing out this article to me.
 - 22 The visual and public representation of power in China clearly has a long and extremely complex history. It is, however, largely *not* based on images of the physical person of the emperor and his officials.
 - 23 Lu Xun, "Lun zhaoxiang zhilei" 論照相之類 [On photography], *Yusi* 9 (January 12, 1925), in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945*, ed. and trans. Kirk Denton (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 199.
 - 24 See, for example, Ding Richang 丁日昌, *Baijiang tuzhuan* 百將圖傳 [Illustrated biographies of a hundred generals] (Jiangsu, 1869), or Wu Youru's series of depictions of famous Qing generals, *Baijiang tu* 百將圖 [Illustrations of a hundred generals], first published in the 1890s and reproduced in *Wu Youru huabao* 吳友如畫報 [Treasury of Wu Youru's pictures], vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhongguo shuhua chubanshe, 1998).
 - 25 He Mingfu's image is clearly based on a photograph of Li by an unknown photographer, also roughly dating to 1896. It is reproduced in Mrs. Archibald Little, *Li Hung Chang: His Life and Times* (London: Cassell, 1903), opposite page 232. *Dianshizhai huabao* published a number of images of Li, with some related to current events, such as an 1885 image of Li signing the peace treaty with the French at the conclusion of the Sino-French war or during Li's 1896 visit to Shanghai. Other images are more scurrilous. Ye Xiaoqing notes, for example, one image called "Excessive Affection," which refers to Li's purported affair with an American woman during his New York trip. See Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 151–53; Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884–1898* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), 5, 22, 29–30, 64.
 - 26 The obvious heirs to these images of Li are multiple, in the form of China's twentieth-century political figures, from images of Sun Yatsen to, of course, images of Mao Zedong. In comparison, contemporary photographs of the imperial family, specifically Cixi and Puyi, are far more ambiguous and are often private in nature, tending more toward the realm of fantasy.

LINGERING BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Photographic Portraits of Empress Dowager Cixi

Abstract

This paper analyzes how Empress Dowager Cixi utilized photography to produce images for different purposes. While Cixi created a formal image for the foreign public, she also projected a provocative personal celebration of female agency in the photographs intended for informal purposes. Regardless of photography's novel properties, both types of images linger between tradition and innovation. On the one hand, Cixi's formal photo portraits rigorously adopt the visual language of traditional imperial portraiture to ensure the sitter's transformation from a single individual to the embodiment of an empire. On the other hand, Cixi appropriated negatively perceived poses in beauty painting, such as looking into a mirror and crossing her legs, to emphasize the power generated from feminine beauty and fecundity. Her appropriation was not to extend the painting's original meaning but to facilitate a purposeful subversion.

EMPRESS DOWAGER CIXI (1835–1908) was not only the de facto ruler during the last five decades of the Qing empire (1636–1912), but she was also a pioneer of the modernized representation of sovereignty in China. A fifth-ranked concubine of Emperor Xianfeng 咸豐 (reigned 1850–61), she produced the imperial heir and advanced to the title of Dowager Empress Regent when her son, Emperor Tongzhi 同治 (reigned 1861–75), ascended the throne. Except for the two interims of 1873 to 1874 and 1888 to 1898,¹ Cixi's regency lasted until 1908, creating an unprecedented situation in late Qing politics: a female ruler maintaining imperial authority in the face of foreign imperialist powers. Adapting to international diplomatic conventions, the Empress Dowager began integrating Western performances of kingship with traditional Chinese expressions in the late 1890s, and the newly introduced medium of photography played a crucial role in this process.² Cixi commissioned many photographic portraits from around 1903 to 1904. Some were officially bestowed on foreign rulers and, on occasion, her high officials, while many others remained private until the Empress Dowager's death.

The surface of a portrait is where the sitter's likeness and persona converge; therefore, the painted portrait is not only an artwork but also the sitter's painted biography. In Chinese imperial portraiture, the commissioner had absolute authority to supervise the portrait painter, and thus in principle the finished work is the visual demonstration of the sitter's subjective self-presentation.³ Likewise, Cixi wielded absolute mastery over her photographic portraits, with the photographer's agency reduced to a minimum. In this regard, the sheer number of the Empress Dowager's autobiographic portraits becomes the raw material for studying this formidable woman's own voice, which has been buried under commentaries and

anecdotes based on political or commercial agenda.⁴ Images of Cixi have drawn wide scholarly attention in recent years and have been investigated from various vantage points, such as performativity, gender, and gaze.⁵ Specifically, Cheng-hua Wang discusses Cixi's portraits in terms of the evolution of her power and considers their publicity and circulation, thereby enriching our understanding of making images of the "Old Buddha."⁶

These scholarly efforts, however, still leave unresolved the fundamental question of why Cixi adopted certain poses in front of the camera lens. How do these photographs make the sitter's self-expression visible? From where do these exceptional images take their inspiration? This paper examines these issues by scrutinizing the visual language and function of Cixi's photographic portraits. I contend the Empress Dowager might have differentiated her public and private image in the original context. Although the circulation of unauthorized images, which began soon after Cixi's photo portraits were taken, may have blurred her intention,⁷ differences between the two types of images can still be identified by analyzing the choice of pose and the presence of daily utensils. On the one hand, Cixi's official photographs follow the principles of Chinese imperial portraiture so rigorously that they clearly continue it into a new medium. Photography's novel capacities are stripped away, leaving only its reproducibility. On the other hand, Cixi also took inspiration from traditional painting for her informal images. Her appropriation, however, was a purposeful subversion instead of a passive extension of the painting's original meaning. With the strong awareness of the multifaceted gaze of both photographer and viewer, Cixi's informal images were designed to achieve an innovative celebration of female agency.

Posing "Empress Dowager Cixi of the Great Qing Empire"

Revisionist historians argue that one of the key reasons why Cixi succeeded in ruling the Qing empire for more than four decades was her support of modernization, yet the reforms did not affect her representation of sovereignty until the turn of the century. This is understandable since Chinese imperial portraiture had seldom been produced for the general public since the Song dynasty (960–1279).⁸ The absolute authority of the ruling house was confirmed through the abstract notion of *tianming* 天命, or heaven's order, without the necessity of propagating it via images. By contrast, European royal portraiture was highly publicized and worked as the connecting knot between the ruler/sitter and subject/viewer. A king's portrait, as Louis Marin puts it, offered him the icon of the absolute monarch he desired to be and hence was "his *real presence*."⁹ It is under the influence of such ideology that royal portraits were widely circulated in different media and served as diplomatic gifts. Using a portrait as her real presence in the public domain was



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Cover of the French journal *Le Rire*, July 1900. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

not Cixi's concern during her early regency—yet when she quelled the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 and declared war on all foreign imperialist powers in 1900, her reputation plunged in the eyes of the foreign public.¹⁰ The French magazine *Le Rire* exemplifies how contemptible Cixi's public image was at the time: the cover of the July 1900 issue features a caricature of the Empress Dowager as an ugly, man-nish, savage-looking Manchu (fig. 1). The Qing court never officially protested such distorted images, but Cixi's friendly attitude toward the camera when she returned to Beijing from refuge in 1902 suggests her awareness of the need to improve her public image.¹¹

Soon after Cixi resumed activities in the capital, her sympathetic friend Sarah Conger (born 1843), the wife of the American ambassador, proposed the project of publicizing the Empress Dowager's portrait. At an audience in April 1903, Conger suggested Cixi correct public opinion by commissioning a portrait that would be displayed at the international exposition in St. Louis in 1904.¹² Conger's positive assessment of this strategy, however, contrasted with Cixi's hesitation and signified a fundamentally different notion about "public presence" in China: the body of a sovereign was divine and that of an imperial woman was private.¹³ By this logic, how could Cixi, a regent and an imperial woman, present her image to an unknown audience? It is unclear how the dilemma was settled, but the urgency of restoring her public image finally overcame traditional ideology, and the commission was soon confirmed. Now it was necessary to conceive a proper setting and pose for the Empress Dowager's first-ever public portrait. Cixi came across the idea of taking a photograph after learning about the time-consuming sitting process required for a Western portrait painting.¹⁴ Yu Xunling 裕勛齡 (1874–1943), a young bannerman who had studied photography techniques in Paris while his father, Yu Geng 裕庚 (died 1905), served as the ambassador to France from 1899 to 1902, was recommended to serve as the photographer.¹⁵



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Xunling, *Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi*, photograph, 1903–1904. From *Gugong jiucang renwu zhaopian ji* (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1990), p. 26, fig. 13.

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Xunling, *Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi*, photograph, 1903–1904. Courtesy of Blair House, The President's Guest House, United States Department of State, BH-2009 0001.

Cixi immediately summoned Yu Xunling to the Yihe Yuan 頤和園 (Garden of Nurtured Harmony, a.k.a. Summer Palace) and ordered him to take two sets of photographs: one of her in a sedan chair on the way to an audience, and the other of her seated on the throne as if in the middle of an audience.¹⁶ The request suggests the sitter wanted her performance as a ruler to appear in the photographs as a way to create a proper official image. According to the account of Yu Deling 裕德齡 (1885–1944), Xunling's younger sister and Cixi's lady-in-waiting at the time, the Empress Dowager witnessed how the photograph was developed and printed, and she was much impressed with photography's convenience and lifelike visual effect.¹⁷ Cixi enthusiastically commissioned other photographs and ordered large quantities of them to be printed. In September 1903, the *Shengrong zhang* 聖容帳 (Inventory of Imperial Portraits) was established, which numbered about six hundred prints of more than thirty kinds of photographs.¹⁸

These photographic portraits of Cixi share several common features. Most of them are staged around her throne with a banner hanging above it.¹⁹ Objects with symbolic meanings are displayed on flanking tables. Sometimes the same cloth that was used in the photographs of her as Guanyin appears as a backdrop, as is seen behind the standing screen (see fig. 5). Four extant examples facilitate the study of Cixi's official image: one portrait bestowed on Xunling and his brother, Yu Xinling 裕馨齡 (fig. 2)²⁰; one large photograph that was given to the American president Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919; fig. 3); and two portraits gifted to Sarah Conger (figs. 4 and 5). The first portrait is the earliest dated photograph for this official purpose. The original photograph shows the Empress Dowager sitting upon the throne, which is fashioned with lotus flowers that imply the summer



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi*, China, 1903, hand-colored gelatin silver print, 23.1 x 17.2 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



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Frontispiece of Sarah P. Conger's book *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1911).

season, and details of Cixi's face were carefully painted by hand. The right margin is inscribed with the date on which the portrait was to be bestowed 光緒二十九年六月吉日 referring to an auspicious day in the sixth month of the twenty-ninth year of the Guangxu reign (late July to August of 1903). Names and official titles of the recipients are marked in the left margin. This print was likely prepared as a special reward to the photographer because, as will be further discussed, such photographic portraits were not distributed frequently until 1905.

In terms of the two photographs given to Mrs. Conger, one is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (fig. 4), while the other exists only as the frontispiece of her memoir (fig. 5). Although they were presented after the portrait for the St. Louis exposition was completed in December 1903, Cixi's summer dress and the decorative objects indicate they were taken earlier in the year. Sitting formally on the imperial throne, Cixi holds an unfolded fan painted with a peony. The treatment of her face is similar to the portrait given to Xunling; only the cheeks and lips are slightly colored red (see fig. 2).²¹ The portrait in Mrs. Conger's memoir was also obtained through official channels, as it was retouched and identified as being reproduced "by special permission." Cixi maintains a similarly rigorous posture, but she does not hold anything in her hands.

Highly satisfied with the photograph given to Xunling, Cixi presented an enlarged and meticulously hand-colored print to President Roosevelt. The portrait remained in the collection of Blair House (located across the street from the White House) until David Hogge, archivist of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, identified the sitter a few years ago (see fig. 3).²² This work is unusual in its composition: the banner and the side tables are cropped in the enlarged image,



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Xunling, photograph of the unfinished portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi, painted by Katharine Carl, 1904. Glass plate negative, 24.1 x 17.8 cm (9.5 x 7 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-247.

which erased the identity of the Empress Dowager. The objects on both sides of the throne, including a spittoon and some tissue papers, may explain why the print was cropped as such. Neither the photographs given to Conger nor the St. Louis portrait include these daily utensils, yet they appear in almost all of the other photographs in which Cixi casually posed. In this regard, the spittoon may be a critical detail that differentiates the original function of certain photographs. In other words, those without it were meant to be candidates for the Empress Dowager's internationally distributed official portrait in which any impropriety and traces of daily life must be avoided. In addition to excluding such casual utensils, great care was also spent on which objects to feature in the portraits. As Cheng-hua Wang has pointed out, the dragon, the foremost symbol of the Chinese emperor, is nowhere to be found. Instead, proper emblems for the Empress Dowager, such as the phoenix and peacock, are present.²³

The carefully arranged setting and pose in the photo portraits must have been useful references when Cixi sat for her oil portrait. The fact that Cixi did not sit for the St. Louis portrait until December 1903 suggests she had time to take various photographs and determine the most appropriate posture for the oil portrait.²⁴ The result is the strong similarity of composition between the photographs and the oil portrait, except that the painted work presents the sitter in a more formal reception space decorated with the three-piece throne set that includes a throne, a standing screen, and a pair of fans (fig. 6). Cixi's pose is also slightly different from her photo portraits. Instead of holding her hands together on her lap, she rests her left arm on a cushion. In fact, the portrait painter suggested this adjustment. According to the memoir of American artist Katharine Carl (1865–1938), who

carried out this portrait commission, Cixi originally assumed the same posture as in the photographs.

[Her Majesty] had on fur-lined under-sleeves, which hid half her beautiful hands. The effect of her tiny finger-tips, with their long curving nails and jeweled shields, the palms not being visible, was most unfortunate. Added to this, she held them tightly together in her lap, and the lines were obscured by a large, pale-blue handkerchief in one hand. ... I told Her Majesty I did not like her hands as they were. "But I like them like that," she said ... and I was obliged to begin the picture with the hands in that position.²⁵

Cixi's understanding of imperial portraiture and her experiments with photography had convinced her that sitting upright and holding her hands together best expressed her status, dignity, and the formality of her portrait. A few days later, however, she agreed with the painter's suggestion of letting her left arm rest on a cushion.²⁶ The reason why Cixi relented remains unclear, but since it was proposed by an American painter who represented the unknown foreign public gaze, the Empress Dowager might have been persuaded that this minor change would not harm the formality and benign image she intended to promote.

In addition to the upright and rigorous pose, the strong preference for a frontal view and the densely crowded objects that reduce the sense of space in Cixi's photographic and oil portraits are other features adopted from traditional imperial portraiture. These changes result in a visual language that is vastly different from what is found in photographs of Western monarchs. Overall, they echo the typical features of early Chinese photographic portraiture—something Western photographers appropriated from Chinese ancestral portraits and which thereby became the model for early Chinese photographic portraiture²⁷—and raises the question of whether Cixi simply complied with this self-orientalized visual language. In fact, such choices may have generated from a political consideration. The Empress Dowager might have emulated the Western practice of commissioning portraits for public display, but the notion of a king's portrait as his real public presence was not part of her mind-set.

Despite her familiarity with the portraits of European sovereigns,²⁸ Cixi decided to follow the traditions of Qing imperial ancestral portraiture under the premise that it was the most appropriate style with which to transform the sitter from an individual into a symbol of supreme authority. The techniques for enacting this transformation originated in the mid-Ming (1368–1644) convention of erasing the sitter's personality as an individual in ritual portraits.²⁹ In the same vein, Cixi minimized her body language and facial expression, thereby transforming herself from

an individual into the embodiment of the Great Qing Empire.³⁰ She also bypassed the Confucian restriction on women's public presentation, for what is exposed is no longer her body but rather a symbolic being. It should be noted, however, that Cixi did experiment with some elements of Western visual language. Several photographs were taken from a three-quarters angle,³¹ yet it is possible that uncertainty as to whether these elements could achieve the same dual function of representing sublime sovereignty and avoiding Confucian scrutiny caused Cixi to adhere closely to tradition.

With the aid of photography the official image of the Empress Dowager of the Grand Qing Empire was completed for the foreign public. Since it was an unprecedented project, Cixi was eager to learn viewers' opinions. She showed the portrait to her foreign female guests and highest court officials right after Carl completed the portrait intended for the St. Louis exposition.³² The satisfying compliments she received resulted in a slightly wider semipublic viewing. The portrait was moved to the Waiwu bu 外務部 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) for a limited exhibition to officials whose ranks qualified them to view the portrait before it was shipped to the United States on April 21, 1904.³³ That marked the first and the last occasion for a reigning Chinese monarch to publicize his/her appearance in a painted medium. It seems Cixi grew more comfortable with the practice of distributing the portraits after this semipublic viewing. Soon afterward she began to bestow her photographic portraits on close officials and foreign guests more frequently. Cixi's close ally Qu Hongji 瞿鴻禨 (1850–1918) recorded receiving a portrait on June 8, 1904, noting in his diary that such imperial favor “never occurred in the past, thus my descendants should always pay respect to [the photograph] and forever remember the imperial favor.”³⁴ The majority of Cixi's presentations, however, were to foreign guests. The American missionary Isaac Taylor Headland (1859–1942) mentioned seeing two large photographs to Roosevelt and Conger in the American legation, and “similar photographs had been sent to all the ministers and rulers represented at Peking [Beijing].”³⁵ The photograph to Roosevelt in Headland's account is very likely the photo portrait in Blair House. In addition to sending photographs to foreign ambassadors, envoys, and associated personnel, the Empress Dowager also offered her photo portraits when she received these guests in person. For instance, the wife of Japanese ambassador Uchida Kōsai (1865–1936) was given a photo portrait when Cixi received the couple on June 5, 1905.³⁶ As such, these formal portraits helped shape the Empress Dowager's public image as a benign ruler who concealed her personality behind a rigorous pose and reserved facial expression—but this is only one aspect of her persona. When Cixi posed as the matriarch of the Qing imperial household, what she radiated in these informal portraits was a provocative celebration of her female identities.



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi*, 1903–1904. Glass plate negative, 24.1 x 17.8 cm (9.5 x 7 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-251.

Private Celebration of Female Agency

In contrast to the conservative strategy employed when creating her public image, Cixi performed much more provocatively in works intended for unofficial purposes.³⁷ Her central concern was not propriety but self-expression. Tactics of self-expression were already visible in her early portrait paintings, through which she projected the image of a capable regent.³⁸ Yet in the photographic portraits, the elderly Empress Dowager focused on the ephemeral feminine beauty that she had spent her life pursuing and maintaining.³⁹ The appropriation of suggestive postures from the genre of beauty paintings (*shinü hua* 仕女畫) is most striking. Cixi posed in ways that were considered improper for women of good social standing, but her prestigious status and age transcended possible negative perceptions, and conversely they ascribed new meanings to these postures. Two poses are of particular significance: looking into a mirror and sitting with crossed legs.

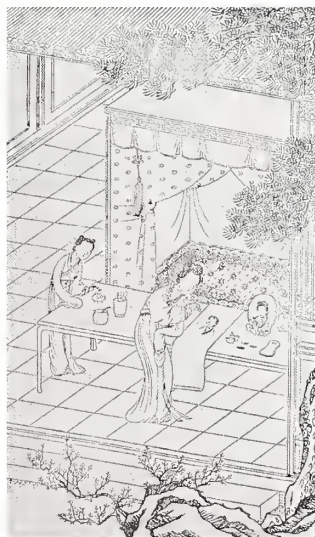
The image of Cixi gazing into a hand mirror marks the epitome of her celebration of female agency (fig. 7). The background setting and the banner are the same as the formal photo portraits discussed above, but the spittoon and tissue paper on the throne lend a sense of intimacy to the image and also imply the sitter did not pose for a formal occasion. Standing in front of the throne, Cixi supports her right elbow on a tall stand covered with a cloth that was presumably from Europe, and she holds a mirror in her left hand. She has a pin decorated with a flower in her right hand while she looks narcissistically at her reflection in the hand mirror. Her two prominent nail protectors point to the banner, as if to direct the viewer to associate the sitter with her full honorary title displayed overhead. Cixi also assumed the



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi with attendants in front of Paiyun men, Summer Palace, 1903–1904*. Glass plate negative, 17.8 x 24.1 cm (7 x 9.5 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-260.



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Illustration from chapter fourteen of *Record of the Spirit Returning to the Peony Pavilion* by Tang Xianzu with woodblock illustration by Huang Mingqi, 1617, 20.9 x 12.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

same pose openly before the camera lens, an action that goes against the common idea of the daily toilette being a private matter. For instance, she took the mirror-looking pose among the entourage at the Paiyun men 排雲門 (Gate of Dispelling Clouds) of the Yihe Yuan (fig. 8). Whereas all the women look straight at the lens, Cixi gazes enthusiastically into the hand mirror.

In fact, Cixi acts out a common subject that has a long history in literature and visual culture.⁴⁰ Looking at one's own reflection is a crucial step for self-identification. By extension, it can also imply narcissism.⁴¹ For women in China, however, the Confucian patriarchy had long suppressed any positive aspects of looking into a mirror. It mandated that women could only look into a mirror for their beloved partners; otherwise they would risk condemnation for seeming superficial or vain.⁴² With the popularity of the cult of *qing* 情 (sentiment) in Ming and Qing cultural spheres, a more positive perspective emerged toward representing the female self. Women no longer looked into a mirror merely to lament their loneliness or to adorn themselves for their beloved. A mirror became a device to assert agency when women incorporated it into their own images, as the novel *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The peony pavilion) by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) exemplifies.⁴³ Before dying, his lovelorn heroine Du Liniang 杜麗娘 painted an idealized self-portrait that played a critical role in uniting her with her dream lover Liu Mengmei 柳夢梅. A seventeenth-century illustration of this episode, “Xiezhen” 寫真 (Sketching a likeness), follows the story and demonstrates the difference between Liniang and her idealized self-portrait (fig. 9).⁴⁴ Looking into a mirror thus becomes a representation of the heroine's subjectivity—yet Liniang's claim to female agency is incomplete. Were it not for Mengmei's discovery and preservation of the portrait, her roaming soul would not come back to life. Interestingly, similar depictions of famous women painting self-portraits emerged around the same time.⁴⁵ The phenomenon could be related to the popularity of the *Mudan ting*, but overall it indeed helped to reinforce the positive aspect of the mirror-looking subject.



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi*, China, 1903–1904, hand-colored gelatin silver print, 23.1 x 17.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

By the time these photographs of Cixi were taken, the poignant representation of female subjectivity had become quite common in literature and theatrical performances.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is by no means surprising to find Cixi taking the symbolism of the mirror one step further.⁴⁷ She looks into a mirror for no one but herself, and she holds full control over her images, including composition, pose, and audience. The dynamics between the Empress Dowager and the photographer exemplify such fundamental control. According to Yu Deling, Cixi was displeased at the first photo shooting because Xunling did not notify her before he pressed the shutter and therefore captured her making a serious face. She commanded that he should always inform her thereafter.⁴⁸ Although scholars have cautioned Yu Deling's memoirs are a mixture of facts and fabricated stories,⁴⁹ her account about this incident is possibly true. As mentioned earlier, Deling recorded that Cixi sat on the sedan chair to take her first photographs, and there are indeed matching prints in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art and the Palace Museum, Beijing.⁵⁰ Therefore, this communication between Cixi and Xunling at the photo shooting might well have occurred. Such an absolute power relation makes Cixi's photographic portraits similar to self-portraits: Xunling's role was reduced to the hand following the sitter's order to press the shutter.

It appears that the Empress Dowager's narcissistic pose celebrates her identity as a woman. Were it not for physical beauty and fertility, she would not have entered the imperial harem and given birth to Emperor Tongzhi, which made her regency possible. In other words, her fecundity was the origin of her tremendous political power, and it thus was worth to be celebrated and visually recorded. Interestingly,



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi*, 1903–1904. Glass plate negative, 24.1 x 17.8 cm (9.5 x 7 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-254.

Cixi's self-portrait is in effect as much idealized as is that of Du Liniang. Whereas the glass-plate negatives and prints housed in the Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art show the original image, the prints preserved in the Palace Museum in Beijing are retouched and thus show a younger and wrinkle-free face of the sitter (fig. 10). Retouching was a common practice in photography at that time, and in the context of Cixi's project she likely kept, appreciated, and perhaps displayed the retouched prints. They present her in a realistic yet idealized manner, and thus they satisfied her narcissism and became emblems of her femininity.

In addition to advancing a traditional subject, Cixi also appropriated rather provocative poses to claim her subjectivity. In one photograph she returns to her core identity as the matriarch of the inner and outer courts (fig. 11). The Empress Dowager sits on the throne, crossing her right leg over her knee and leaning toward the cushion, while her sparkling, vigilant eyes look purposefully aside. The posture was considered inappropriate for wellborn women because it exposed the contours of the body. The *Nüer jing* 女兒經 (Classics for daughters), a popular textbook for woman's education since the sixteenth century, admonishes that "a lopsided posture and crossed legs harm your dignity; showing your face outside the household ruins your reputation" 身歪腳斜傷體面，拋頭露面壞聲名.⁵¹ This notion persisted into the twentieth century, as even modern women of the Republican era had to negotiate a proper style of crossing their legs in public.⁵² Due to this posture's heavy emphasis on the body, painters used it extensively to stimulate the desire of male viewers. The motif was so firmly codified that a cross-legged beauty portrayed adjacent to a love poem was enough to create a highly amorous atmo-



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Anonymous, *Twelve Beauties*, China, eighteenth century, colors on paper, 184 x 98 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

sphere. In the set of twelve lovelorn beauties commissioned by Prince Yinzen 胤禛 (later Emperor Yongzheng 雍正, reigned 1722–35) as an example, one painting depicts a lady reading by a table with her legs crossed (fig. 12). The love poem on the opened page of her book, a courtesan's passionate poem to her lover during the Tang dynasty (618–907),⁵³ bespeaks the lady's longing for her own beloved. If the posture is combined with provocative elements, such as a partially exposed female body and objects with sexual implications (bergamot, for instance), the image can be further transformed into an erotic painting.⁵⁴ Cixi certainly did not assume the cross-legged pose out of ignorance. Unlike most Manchu women, she was educated and well aware of the importance of self-cultivation, and her literary and artistic talents had created opportunities to stay close to Emperor Xianfeng.⁵⁵ As a learned woman, Cixi must have known the general negative and erotic perception of the cross-legged pose. Indeed, the posture is admittedly more relaxed than sitting upright, and it might have made it easier for the aged Old Buddha to stay still during the long exposure time, yet the sitter's body language and facial expression do not show signs of resting. Cixi is aware of the camera. Her body does not collapse into full rest, but it maintains a certain centrality. Nothing erotic can be discerned from the image. What is captured, however, is a commanding matriarch ready to confront the male gaze.

When this photograph was taken, the imperial matriarch, at the age of sixty-nine or seventy, had surpassed the constraints associated with marriage and childbearing. Whether her pose was appropriate or not was no longer an issue. Cixi was able to derive inspiration from popular representations of women and transcend the erotic aspects of these postures, transforming them into an expression of her matriarchal power. Her photograph with her entourage best illustrates this attitude (fig. 13). The Empress Dowager crosses her legs and holds in her right hand an artificial orchid, which is homophonous with her first title Lan Guiren 蘭貴人 (Orchid Worthy Lady) in the imperial harem and thus is an emblem of identity. Instead of being sensuous or seductive, the image is rather a private celebration of female agency.

Conclusion

Cixi's photographic portraits are heavily swayed by Chinese imperial portraiture, yet her strategies of self-presentation play out differently in formal and informal portraits. Her formal portraits present a continuation of tradition, while the informal images showcase her innovative means of self-expression. She used the convenient reproducibility of photography to conform to the Western diplomatic decorum of frequently presenting gifts of the sovereign's image, but in the composition and visual language of her photographs, she followed the traditions of imperial portraiture to ensure these images presented her as the embodiment of the Qing



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Yu Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi and Her Entourage*, China, 1903, gelatin silver print, 24.1 x 17.8 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

regime. Therefore, although the materiality of these portraits was new to Chinese imperial portraiture, the ideology that directed their techniques of visual representation remained traditional.

Nonetheless, the convenience of photography provided an easy channel for the Empress Dowager to play with various postures and costumes in her informal portraits. Her conscious choice of suggestive poses ridiculed their common function as devices to satisfy the erotic male gaze. In so doing, Cixi desexualized these poses and transformed them into expressions of her matriarchal power. By posing under the banner of her honorary title, she confronted through the camera lens the multifaceted gaze of the male photographer and the viewer. Consequently, Cixi's photographs are not only important material for the study of changing ideas of sovereignty in early twentieth-century China, but they also provide invaluable evidence of a Chinese woman's unique and subversive celebration of female agency.

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NOTES

- 1 Officially speaking, the emperors Tongzhi and Guangxu respectively ruled in person, but in effect Cixi remained vocal and powerful. Both emperors attempted unsuccessfully to weaken her power. The former utilized the reconstruction of the Yuanming Yuan 圓明園 (Garden of Perfect Brightness) in 1873 to distance Cixi, but the project was abandoned within a year due to several scandals and strong negative public opinions. The latter collaborated with reform-minded scholars, led by Lang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), and initiated the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. That short-lived political act was terminated by Cixi's coup d'état. Guangxu suffered from the reform's backlash, fundamentally losing his power to rule directly. See Emily Mokros, "Reconstructing the Imperial Retreat: Politics, Communications, and the Yuanming Yuan Under the Tongzhi Emperor, 1873–4," in *Late Imperial China* 33, no. 2 (December 2012): 76–118; Luke S. Kwong, "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898," in *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (July 2000): 663–95.
- 2 Cixi's first audience for foreigners was a luncheon held on December 14, 1898; only the wives of foreign ambassadors and ministers were invited. Her debut before the foreign ministers did not take place until January 29, 1902. See "Empress Dowager Entertains," *New York Times*, December 15, 1898, 2; "Chinese Dowager Empress Center of Attraction," *New York Times*, January 29, 1902, 9 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers, www.proquest.com).
- 3 Qing imperial portraiture especially reflects these absolute power relations and the emperor's agency in shaping this rulership by commissioning particular portraits. Maxwell Hearn, "Qing Imperial Portraiture," in *Shōzō: Kokusai kōryō bijutsushi kenkyūkai dairokkai shinpojiamu*, ed. Department of Aesthetics and Art History, Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University (Kyoto: Kokusai Kōryū Bijutsushi Kenkyūkai, 1990), 108. The only exception is the posthumous portrait supervised by the deceased's relatives. For instance, Cixi and her coregent, Empress Dowager Ci'an, commissioned several posthumous portraits of Emperor Xianfeng in 1863, an act well documented in the archives of the *Zaoban chu* 造辦處 (Imperial Workshop) of the *Neiwufu* 內務府 (Department of the Imperial Household). See "Neiwufu zaobanchu huojidang" 內務府造辦處活計檔 [Documents of the Imperial Workshop of the Department of the Imperial Household], copies of microfilm held in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Box No. 35_131_583.
- 4 Numerous biographies of Cixi, some scholarly and others anecdotal or fictional, have been published since 1908. For reviews of most of the biographies published until 1980, see Kwang Zhaojiang 鄺兆江, "Cixi xingxiang yu Cixi yanjiu chutan" 慈禧形象與慈禧研究初探 [Research on the image of Cixi and studies on Cixi], *Dalu zazhi* 61, no. 3 (1980), 4–15. With the publication of more Qing archives after the 1980s, more reliable materials on Cixi have emerged, thus allowing scholars to pursue more research on Cixi and provide new insights into her personality. See Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady: The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Xu Che 徐徹, *Cixi dazhuan* 慈禧大傳 [Biography of Cixi] (Shenyang: Liaoshen shushe, 1994); Wong Young-tsu 汪榮祖, "Jiyi yu lishi: Yehenala shi ge'an lunshu" 記憶與

- 歷史:葉赫那拉氏個案論述 [Memory and history: A case study of the Empress Dowager Cixi], *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 64 (June 2009): 1–39; Chen Jie-hsian 陳捷先, *Cixi xiezhen* 慈禧寫真 [Picturing Cixi] (Taipei: Yuanliu chubanshe, 2010).
- 5 Lydia Liu, “The Secret of Her Greatness,” in *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 140–80; Carlo Rojas, *The Naked Gaze: Reflections on Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 1–30; Yuhang Li, “Oneself as a Female Deity: Representations of Empress Dowager Cixi as Guanyin,” *Nan Nü* 14, no. 1 (January 2013): 75–118.
 - 6 Cheng-hua Wang, “‘Going Public’: Portraits of the Empress Dowager Cixi, Circa 1904,” *Nan Nü* 14, no. 1 (January 2013): 119–76.
 - 7 Unauthorized prints of Cixi’s photo portraits appeared in publications soon after these photographs were taken. The Shanghai-based publishing house Youzheng Shuju 有正書局 advertised its book of famous rulers of the world, with Cixi’s photo portrait included, in the newspaper *Shibao* 時報 [Eastern times] on June 12, 1904. The channel through which the publishing house obtained Cixi’s photo portraits is unclear, but it is very likely related to the Yu family that was directly involved in Cixi’s photo shooting project. Its members kept negatives and prints of Cixi’s photographs and donated or sold them to collections in the United States. For instance, the prints of Cixi housed in the special collection of the University of California, Los Angeles, as well as the collections of negatives in the Freer Gallery of Art both came from Yu Deling’s family. See Wang, “Going Public,” 120, 150.
 - 8 During this time, imperial portraiture was incorporated into the ruling house’s ancestral cult. Thus, the images of emperors and their ancestors became familial and private. Patricia Ebrey, “Portrait Sculptures in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China,” *T’oung Pao* 83, no. Fasc. 1/3 (1997): 53–55.
 - 9 Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 7.
 - 10 The supporters of the Hundred Days’ Reform were well connected with British and American journalists in Shanghai, who assisted them in escaping from China and published their criticisms of Cixi’s clan. Among these articles, some were personal attacks on Cixi and her private life based on anecdotal accounts. They tarnished the Empress Dowager’s international image, despite their questionable reliability. Kwang, “Cixi xingxiang yu Cixi yanjiu chutan,” 108–109.
 - 11 For the reproduction of this photograph, see Gilles Béguin and Dominique Morel, *The Forbidden City: Heart of Imperial China, New Horizons* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 65.
 - 12 Sarah P. Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1909), 247–48.
 - 13 The audience was recorded in the memoirs of two other participants: Cixi’s interpreter Yu Deling 裕德齡 (1885–1944) and Mariam Sinclair Headland (1859–1953), a female missionary physician who built close relationships with members of the inner court. Both reported the Empress Dowager’s dumbfounded, confused reaction to the proposal and remarked that she did not answer Conger’s plea immediately. Mariam Sinclair married the American missionary Isaac Taylor Headland in 1894. Also see Yu Deling, *Two Years in the Forbidden City, by the Princess Der Ling, First Lady in Waiting to the Empress Dowager, Illustrated with Photographs* (New York: Mofat, Yard, 1908), 198–99; Isaac Taylor Headland, *Court Life in China: The Capital, Its Officials and People* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), 104. Although she did not write a memoir, Mariam Sinclair Headland’s observations of the inner court are recorded extensively in her husband’s book.
 - 14 Yu Rongling 裕容齡, *Qinggong suoji* 清宮瑣記 [Miscellaneous notes on the Forbidden City] (Shenyang: Liaoshen shushe, 1999), 16.
 - 15 Yu Geng’s daughters Rongling 容齡 (1882–1973) and Deling were summoned to work as the Empress Dowager’s interpreters and ladies-in-waiting from 1902 through 1904. Their brother, Xunling, thus received the photography commission due to his sisters’ personal relationship with Cixi. Deling later wrote several books in English of anecdotal accounts on her experiences in the imperial inner court, with Cixi’s photo portraits inserted. For the study of the Yu family, see Grant Hayter-Menzies, *Imperial Masquerade: The Legend of Princess Der Ling* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).
 - 16 Yu, *Two Years in the Forbidden City*, 218–21.
 - 17 Yu, *Two Years in the Forbidden City*, 221–23.
 - 18 Jing Lin, *The Photographs of Cixi in the Collection of the Palace Museum* (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2002), 16, 19, 23. The inventory is only partially published in Lin Jing’s book. My gratitude goes to Dr. Wang Cheng-hua, who generously shared her notes on the rest of the inventory.

- 19 Two kinds of banners were used. One displays the brief title of “Daqing guo dangjin shengmu huangtaihou wansui wansui wanwansui” 大清國當今聖母皇太后萬歲萬歲萬萬歲 (Long Live the Contemporary Sage Mother Empress Dowager of the Great Qing Empire) along with Cixi’s square official seal, the “Cixi huangtaihou zhi bao” 慈禧皇太后之寶 (Empress Dowager Cixi’s Treasure), above and at the center of the banner (see figs. 2 and 4). A small oval seal, “Ning-shou gong” 寧壽宮 (Palace of Tranquil Longevity), is stamped next to the first character, and another small square seal that refers to her studio, the “Daya zhai” 大雅齋 (Studio of Great Elegance), is placed next to the final character. “Guangxu guimao nian” 光緒癸卯年 (1903) is written vertically beneath the “Daya zhai” seal. The other banner adopts the same format but has Cixi’s complete sixteen-character honorary title (see fig. 5).
- 20 This is another print in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing; the original image is in the museum’s digital database. The image inventory number is 01422-慈禧身着团寿氅衣照-全形_2011628 111541. The Palace Museum cannot verify whether the file in its database is an image of a print in its vast collection or a reproduction from publications that the museum has collected.
- 21 On examining this photograph in the museum, I could only see the coloring on Cixi’s face. Since pigments may have faded over time, it is likely other parts of the photograph were also painted.
- 22 According to David Hogge, the portrait was originally framed in yellow satin, but it was later remounted in its current frame, and no evidence shows later trimming of the photograph.
- 23 Cheng-hua Wang suggested that the use of a peacock was to remind the viewer of the legendary phoenix, and she offered a fifteenth-century example. See Wang, “Going Public,” 143–44, n. 49.
- 24 In her memoir the portrait painter Katharine Carl recorded the date when she began working on the St. Louis portrait. The memoir also contains a reproduction of this portrait. Katharine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China* (New York: Century Publication, 1907), front cover, 215.
- 25 Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, 216–17.
- 26 Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, 280–81.
- 27 Wu Hung, “Inventing a ‘Chinese’ Portrait Style in Early Photography: The Case of Milton Miller,” in *Brush and Shutter: Early Photography in China*, ed. Jeffery W. Cody and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 80–87.
- 28 As an example of her collection of portraits of European sovereigns, Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918) presented an eight-inch photographic family portrait to Cixi in 1902. Lin Jing 林京, “Ehuang Nigula Ershi quanjia zhao” 俄皇尼古拉二世全家照 [Family photograph of Nicolas II of Russia], *Zijincheng* 3 (1983): 27.
- 29 Cheng-hua Wang, “Material Culture and Emperorhip: The Shaping of Imperial Roles at the Court of Xuanzong (r. 1426–35),” PhD diss., Yale University, 1998, 243–44.
- 30 Wang, “Going Public,” 142–43.
- 31 Lin Jing, *Gugong cang Cixi zhaopian*, 12, 17, 33.
- 32 Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, 294–96.
- 33 Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, 296–98.
- 34 Qu Hongji, *Shengde jilue* 聖德紀略 (Taipei xian: Wenhai chubanshe, 1970), 104–105.
- 35 Headland, *Court Life in China*, 73. The Blair House portrait should be the portrait intended for Theodore Roosevelt that Headland noted.
- 36 Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館, ed. *Qingdai Zhongnanhai dang’an dihou shenghuo juan shang* 清代中南海檔案帝后生活卷上 [Documents of the palaces in Zhonghai and Nanhai, Daily life of emperors and empresses, volume 1], vol. 21 (Beijing: Xiyuan chubanshe), 305.
- 37 It remains unclear at what occasion and to what audience Cixi showed these photographs in which she posed provocatively, but it is certain that they were not given out as the Empress Dowager’s official images. Therefore, I define these photographs in the broad sense as unofficial.
- 38 Wang Cheng-hua 王正華, “Zouxiang ‘gongkai hua’: Cixi xiaoxiang de fengge, yunzuo yu xingxiang suzao” 走向「公開化」：慈禧肖像的風格形式、政治運作與形象塑造 [Portraits of the Empress Dowager Cixi and their public roles], in *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 32 (2012): 244–56.
- 39 Cixi’s fervent pursuit of beauty is well recorded in the accounts of her attendants. For instance, her maid Rong’er 榮兒 described the meticulous process of Cixi’s morning toilette. Jin Yi 金易, Shen Yiling 沈義玲, *Gongnü tanwanglu* 宮女談往錄 [Memoir of an imperial attendant] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1991), 43–44.
- 40 Peng Ying-chen 彭盈真, “Guying zilian? Qiantan Cixi taihou de liangzhang zhaopian” 顧影自憐？淺談慈禧太后的兩張照片 [Lameting one’s reflection? Discussions on two of the Empress Dowager Cixi’s photographs], *Zijincheng* 188 (2010): 70–75.
- 41 Diana T. Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery and Women’s Agency*

- (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113.
- 42 The seventh segment of the *Niushi zhen tu* 女史箴圖 (Admonitions Scroll) attributed to Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 244–405) that illustrates the text of Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300) is a remote pictorial representation of this ideology. Regardless of whether the painter had the Confucian discourse in mind, later interpretations already made this image a classic admonition to women against spending time looking at their own reflection and adorning themselves. For the reproduction of this image, see Shane McCausland, *First Masterpiece of Chinese Painting: The Admonition Scroll* (London: British Museum, 2003), 64.
 - 43 Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27–31. For the detailed discussion of the *Mudan ting* and female subjectivity, see Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 68–114.
 - 44 Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits, 1600–1900* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 18.
 - 45 For instance, the *Qianqiu jueyan tu* 千秋絕艷圖 [Painting of famous beauties of all times], a handscroll formerly attributed to Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1494–1552) but in effect a Qing copy, includes the image of Xue Yuan 薛媛 (act. ninth century) painting a self-portrait. For the reproduction of this segment, see Guo Xueshi and Zhang Zikang, eds., *Zhongguo lidai shinühua ji* 中國歷代仕女畫集 [Collection of Chinese beauty painting] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998), 142–43.
 - 46 The *Mudan ting* was adapted to various popular plays throughout the Qing dynasty, while the female characters in the eighteenth-century novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [Dream of the red chamber] became common subjects in the nineteenth-century visual culture. See Guojia Tushuguan, ed., *Guben Honglou meng chatu huihua jicheng* 古本紅樓夢插圖繪畫集成 [Collection of the illustrations to the *Dream of the Red Chamber*] (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian weisuo fuzhi zhongxin, 2001).
 - 47 It is unclear from which play or novel Cixi drew inspiration to assume this pose, but it does not impede this discussion of how she utilized the metaphor of the mirror to claim female agency.
 - 48 Yu, *Two Years in the Forbidden City*, 219–20.
 - 49 Zhu Jiajin 朱家潛, “Deling, Rongling suo zhu shu zhong de shishi cuowu” 德齡、容齡所著書中的史實錯誤 [Mistakes on historical facts in the publications of Deling and Rongling], in *Gugong tuishi lu* 故宮退食錄 [Notes after retirement from the Palace Museum] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2000), 467–503.
 - 50 For the reproduction of the print housed in the Palace Museum, Beijing, see Jing Lin, *Photographs of Cixi*, 19.
 - 51 (Ming) Anonymous, “Nüer jing” 女兒經 [Classics for daughters], in Wang Wenbao 王文寶 ed., *Zhongguo ertong qimeng mingzhu tonglan* 中國兒童啟蒙名著通覽 [Collections of classic children’s education books in China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shaonian ertong chubanshe, 1997), 1046–47. For a study of this text, see Xiong Xianjun 熊賢君, *Zhongguo nüzi jiaoyu shi* 中國女子教育史 [History of women’s education in China] (Taiyuanshi: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 132–34.
 - 52 Francesca Dal Lago, “Crossed Legs in 1930s Shanghai: How ‘Modern’ the Modern Woman?” *East Asian History* 19 (2000): 107–108, 111.
 - 53 Wu Hung, “Beyond Stereotypes: The Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and *The Dream of the Red Chamber*,” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 358–59.
 - 54 For examples of such images, see James Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 177, 179.
 - 55 Wang, “Zouxiang ‘gongkai hua,’” 8.



THE EMPRESS DOWAGER'S BIRTHDAY

The Photographs of Cixi's Long Life Without End

1

Xunling, *Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi*, photograph, 1903–1904. From *Gugong jiucang renwu zhaopian ji* (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1990), p. 26, fig. 13.

Abstract

One of the most intriguing sets of images to emanate from the Manchu–Qing court is a series of photographic portraits of the Empress Dowager Cixi taken in 1903 and 1904 in the lead up to her seventieth birthday. The photographer Xunling, son of Yugeng, a high-ranking Manchu official, had learned the craft of photography while residing overseas with his father in Japan and then France. The portrait photographs of the Empress Dowager are discussed in the context of imperial ritual portrait painting and informal paintings of leisure and enjoyment, as well as in the context of commemorative celebrations associated with imperial birthdays. Comparisons with historical examples consider the use of portraiture in international cultural diplomacy and highlight continuities and differences over time. An analysis of more recent photographic portraits of later paramount leaders, notably Chiang Kai-Shek (1887–1975), Mao Zedong (1893–1976), and Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), suggests the ongoing importance of birthdays to promote incumbent rulers and to project a positive image of the country, particularly at times of turmoil and unrest.

IN 1903 THE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER XUNLING (1874–1944), son of a high-ranking Manchu official, was summoned to the Summer Palace (*Yihe yuan*) to take portrait photographs of the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908).¹ The photographs were taken during the period leading up to the Empress Dowager's seventieth birthday and were intended to be hung in the palace or bestowed as awards or tokens of appreciation to mark her birthday (fig. 1).² In recent years Xunling's photographs have attracted considerable scholarly interest as objects of international diplomacy and as iconic images with which to theorize Chinese modernity.³ Little attention has been focused on the photographs as birthday images, nor have the photographs been considered within a history of celebrations to commemorate significant milestones in the life of a leader. From an analysis of selected photographs it can be argued that Cixi's birthday represented a unique conjunction of events and an opportunity to create a series of portraits to mark her seventieth year.

The photographs would function as commemorative images and be used to promote a positive impression of Cixi herself and of the Qing empire in general to international heads of state and diplomats in the period after the Boxer Rebellion, a time of ongoing political instability. The photographs need to be understood within the contexts of imperial portrait paintings and birthday celebrations, where historical comparisons highlight continuities and differences over time. Contemporary photographic portraits of China's paramount leaders suggest the ongoing impor-

tance of birthdays to promote incumbent rulers and to project a positive image of the country, particularly at times of turmoil and unrest.

Imperial Portraiture during the Manchu-Qing Dynasty

Chinese imperial portrait paintings (*shengrong*, meaning “sacred likeness,” or *yurong*, meaning “imperial likeness”) were created for ritual and commemorative purposes. The emperor as the “son of heaven” was depicted in a hieratic, symmetrical *enface* posture that conveyed his “heaven-endowed” physiognomy, which together with codified dress and ornamentation communicated cosmic power. Such portraits were displayed to mark occasions in the cycle of life, death, and commemoration, and they could only be viewed by those who were entitled to participate in the ceremonies. The paintings played an important role in Confucian rituals, notably in the expression of filial piety and the practice of ancestor worship, and they were used to confer legitimacy.⁴

While inscribed ancestor tablets are regarded as vessels of the spirit of the deceased, since the Song dynasty (tenth century) ceremonial portraits were also used in imperial ancestral rituals.⁵ At New Year, for example, the Qianlong Emperor made sacrifices in front of imperial portraits in the Hall of the Sovereign of Longevity (*Shouhuang dian*) in Jingshan. He left instructions that after his death, his portrait was to be hung in the family ancestral temple between portraits of his grandfather, the Kangxi Emperor, and his father, the Yongzheng Emperor.⁶ This practice highlighted the emperor’s imperial lineage, linking the individual to a collective past.

The most formal ritual portraits were required to convey a good likeness in order to be effective—if the likeness was not correct, the sacrifices could not be received—but they were also idealized representations that followed long established artistic codes. During the Manchu-Qing dynasty (1644–1911), formal imperial painted portraits drew on ethnic Han and Manchu cultural traditions and on artistic styles established during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. The portrait celebrated authority and was allied to Daoist concepts of longevity as well as to Buddhist awareness of impermanence and the afterlife. Thus, while imperial portrait painting was based on earlier techniques and conventions, this “traditional art” was regenerative in nature. Elements of other visual and cultural traditions (including Tibetan and European) were enfolded into artistic vocabularies as a way to maintain relevance for the practice over the centuries.⁷ Imperial portraits of the Kangxi (reigned 1662–1722) and Qianlong (reigned 1736–95) emperors created during the period when Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining, 1688–1766) was working for the Manchu-Qing court, for example, display careful modeling of the faces (the most important element of a portrait from a physiognomic point of view)

and modified perspective in the depiction of thrones and carpet design. While such works manifest a hybrid painting style suggesting cultural negotiation and transfer, the court artists (Chinese and Jesuit) were creating objects that satisfied imperial taste and ritual necessity, and they ultimately required official approval.⁸

The Qianlong Emperor (1711–1799) commissioned scores of portraits during his sixty-eight-year reign. Formal portraits (along with a variety of images) were used during certain ceremonies, including an anniversary of his ascension to the throne or a significant birthday, whereas informal portraits and depictions of leisure and enjoyment (*xingle tu*) projected the emperor's personae as filial son, scholar, artist, horseman, hunter, and even Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva associated with transcendent wisdom. While it is not clear how all of the portraits were used, their large number suggests they were not all created for ritual purposes.⁹

Imperial Birthdays

Significant imperial birthdays, notably those marking the ages of sixty, seventy, and eighty, ranked alongside ascensions to the throne and weddings as important national celebrations.¹⁰ Since sixty years represent one cycle of the traditional Chinese calendar—a life cycle—sixty is a birthday of particular significance. In 1713, one day before Emperor Kangxi's sixtieth birthday, an imperial procession was held, starting at the Garden of Joyous Spring (*Changchun yuan*) in the west of Peking (Beijing) and concluding at the Forbidden City. An impression of the event is recorded in a woodblock-printed handscroll published in 1718, accompanied by some forty volumes of written tributes titled *Magnificent Record of the Emperor's Birthday* (*Wanshou shengdian chu ji*). Many court artists were involved in its production, including landscape painter Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715) and figure painter Leng Mei (active 1677–1742).¹¹

In a display of filial piety, Emperor Qianlong conducted lavish celebrations for his mother's sixtieth, seventieth, and eightieth birthdays. To commemorate the sixtieth birthday of Lady Niohuru (1692–1777), he commissioned a formal portrait in full winter court dress. Festivities included sutra recitations at the Temple of Extended Long-life (*Yanshou si*), which had been specially constructed at the Summer Palace (*Yihe yuan*), and an elaborate procession was held from the imperial hunting ground west of Peking to the Forbidden City. The procession was later recorded in a twenty-seven-meter-long painted handscroll that shows opera stages and temporary entertainment structures decorated with stylized longevity characters and phoenix motifs (symbolic of the female principle); festooned ceremonial archways inscribed with sentiments of peace, harmony, and bounty; attendants carrying plates of peaches (symbolic of long life); and bearers in auspicious red robes conveying Lady Niohuru's covered palanquin along the route to the palace.

The handscroll is contained in an elaborate silk-covered box inscribed with gold characters: “Long life without end” (*Wan shou wu jiang*).¹²

To celebrate his mother’s eightieth birthday, and his own sixtieth birthday, the Qianlong Emperor built a temple at the imperial summer mountain resort, *Putuo zongcheng miao*. Known as the Chengde Potala, it was used to host high-level emissaries from northern and western China and Tibet.¹³ The language of Tibetan architecture promoted cultural tolerance and indicated the political reach of the Qing empire. Birthdays were not only celebratory occasions; they provided opportunities for spectacular display and strategic communication.

The Qianlong Emperor’s birthday fell two days before the Mid-Autumn Festival and came to be celebrated as a three-day Festival of Longevity (*Wanshou jie*). The procession marking Qianlong’s eightieth birthday was recorded in the long handscroll *Magnificent Record of the Emperor’s Eightieth Birthday* (*Bajun Wanshou shengdian*) in 1792. The occasion was styled on his grandfather’s sixtieth birthday, but it was even more elaborate.¹⁴

While lavish gifts were presented to the emperor on his birthday, the occasion was also used as an opportunity to gain favor or to maintain peace through tribute. In 1793 Britain sent an envoy to China in an attempt to establish diplomatic contact. The East India Company had been trading with China, but the British government had no direct contact with Chinese officials. Lord Macartney’s visit to the imperial summer resort at Chengde and his request for an audience with the emperor were interpreted by Chinese officials as presenting “birthday congratulations and to pay tribute” in the manner of an emissary from a vassal state.

Macartney traveled with gifts that were intended to impress the emperor. Portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte were installed in a “presence chamber” to convey the authority of the king. In his journal Macartney notes: “What seemed to attract more general notice than anything in the house were the King and Queen’s pictures in their royal robes, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which were hung up opposite the state canopy, in the grand saloon through which we usually passed to the concert room.”¹⁵ Those who gathered to look at the framed portraits would likely have been fascinated by their realistic yet opulent style, as well as by the sense of relative ease of access they afforded to the portraits of British sovereigns.

The meeting between Qianlong and Macartney took place in a tent. Macartney would only perform the kowtow to the emperor if a Chinese official of equal rank would perform the same ceremony in front of a portrait of King George III; this was unacceptable to the Chinese.¹⁶ In a sketch by William Alexander, who was part of the British retinue, Macartney kneels on one knee and presents to the Qianlong Emperor a “large gold box enriched with diamonds in which was enclosed the

King's letter."¹⁷ After Macartney's visit, Qianlong issued an edict to King George III, stating, "Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce."¹⁸ He acknowledged receipt of the king's memorial and tribute, but he refused the request for diplomatic representation in the capital.

The Introduction of Photography to China

Some four decades later, the British forced the issue of trade and access to Chinese markets and officials. The First Opium War, waged from 1839 to 1842, resulted in the Treaty of Nanking, which opened the ports of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai to British trade, ceded the island of Hong Kong to Britain, and imposed a hefty indemnity on the Chinese government. Photography was introduced to China in the aftermath of that war, not long after the daguerreotype and calotype photographic processes were announced in France and England, respectively.

In 1844 Jules Itier (1802–1877), a senior customs official and a member of the French trade embassy to Macao and Guangzhou, took the earliest dated photographs of China. A keen amateur scientist and daguerreotypist, Itier photographed the Chinese and French officials who gathered to sign the Treaty of Whampoa, which granted the French similar trading rights as those of Britain. In the years that followed, numerous professional and amateur photographers traveled to China, stationing themselves (sometimes for very short periods) in the newly created zones where foreign business, diplomatic, and missionary activities were conducted. Chinese professional artists who had long created oil and watercolor portraits (and paintings of ships) for foreign traders and visitors were quick to take up the new craft of photography, but it would be some time before the technology moved north to Tianjin and Peking.

The earliest photographs of a member of the imperial family are portraits of Yixin (1833–1898), Prince Gong, the sixth son of the Daoguang Emperor. The images were taken by British war photographer Felice A. Beato (1834–1906) on November 2, 1860, a few days after the signing of the Convention of Peking that concluded the Second Opium War. The treaty provided war indemnity to Britain and France, allowed residency rights to diplomats, and ceded the mainland territory of Kowloon to Britain, thus linking Kowloon and Hong Kong as colonial territories. Prince Gong, who was given the unenviable task of negotiating the treaty with Britain and France, is captured by Beato in an uncomfortable situation. The portraits, which look as though they were taken against the will of their subject, may be compared to the more relaxed images of the prince taken in 1869 by Scottish photographer John Thomson (1837–1921). Thomson was one of the many

foreigners who ranged across the country in the wake of concessions extracted from the Chinese government in the aftermath of war.¹⁹ His superb photographs display a rare degree of access and artistry.

In the 1860s the Chinese photographer Liang Shitai, also known as See Tay, began to take portraits of Prince Chun Yihuan (1840–1891). Father of the Guangxu Emperor and brother of Yixin, Prince Chun was fascinated with the new technology and supported the policies of reform and self-strengthening that were introduced after China's defeats in the Opium Wars. His photographs offer rare glimpses into imperial life. In a portrait from 1887, commemorating Yihuan's forty-eighth birthday or year (*sui*)—forty-eight comprises four cycles of twelve years—he faces the camera and holds a branch from a pine tree, posing with a live deer at his side. Symbolic of longevity, deer and pine are auspicious attributes for a birthday image. Yihuan's personal seals were added to the negative: "Seventh Prince Chun: Floating with the wind on the Bohai sea" and "Given by the Empress Dowager: Your ideas are perfectly coherent." The text on a tablet was given to him eight years earlier for his fortieth birthday and had since been made into a seal.²⁰ Using modern technology, Liang Shitai and the prince created a new, hybrid form of visual representation that maintained strong conceptual links with earlier paintings of leisure and enjoyment (*xingle tu*).

Liang Shitai also photographed Dai Ze (1868–1929), the great-great-grandson of Emperor Kangxi. This indicates the extent to which photography had penetrated portraiture as a tool in the Qing court in the late 1800s. In one photograph the young man is depicted on horseback, a reference to the proud martial heritage of his forebears, for whom riding and hunting were important cultural pursuits. The photograph may be compared to the famous painting *Portrait of Qianlong Emperor Reviewing the Troops* by Giuseppe Castiglione and to other painted images of imperial family members on horseback. Text written in the emulsion indicates the photograph commemorates the young man's nineteenth birthday or year (*sui*).²¹ Dai Ze married Cixi's niece Jing Rong, whose younger sister Jing Fen was Empress Longyu, wife of the Guangxu Emperor. These photographs confirm that a tradition of taking photographs on birthday occasions was well established in the imperial family.

The Empress Dowager Cixi in Paintings and Photographs

Arguably one of the most intriguing groups of images to emanate from the Manchu-Qing court is the series of glass-plate negatives of the Empress Dowager Cixi leading up to her seventieth birthday. The photographs are generally described by Chinese scholars as falling into four categories: standard portraits, Putuoshan Guanyin costume portraits, group portraits, and portraits in a sedan chair.²²



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi in sedan chair surrounded by eunuchs in front of Renshoudian, Summer Palace, 1903–1904*. Glass plate negative, 17.8 x 24.1 cm (7 x 9.5 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-261

Cixi entered the court in 1852 at the age of eighteen and was chosen as an imperial concubine by the Xianfeng Emperor (1831–1861). She gave birth to Zaichun, who later became the Tongzhi Emperor (1856–1875); she became the Empress Dowager in 1861. After the death of the Tongzhi Emperor, her nephew Zaitian was installed as the Guangxu Emperor (1871–1908). Cixi was Empress Dowager and the de facto ruler of China for almost fifty years.

Her sixtieth birthday in 1894 was overshadowed by the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), in which China's humiliating defeat highlighted the failure of the self-strengthening movement to produce tangible results. In the decade leading up to her seventieth birthday, Cixi quashed the reform program and gave her support to the nationalistic Boxer Rebellion, in which the foreign legations in Peking were attacked. Following the occupation of Peking by foreign troops, Cixi and the emperor fled to Xian. Upon her return to the capital in 1902, she embarked on a new set of diplomatic initiatives that were designed to repair the damage done to the image of China in the eyes of the world.

Perhaps Cixi recalled the success of an audience she gave when a group of diplomatic wives were permitted to pay their compliments to her on the occasion of her sixty-fourth birthday in 1898.²³ According to Sarah Pike Conger, wife of Edwin H. Conger, who was the American ambassador to China at that time, this was the first audience that the Empress Dowager had given to foreign women. Conger comments that Cixi's "face glowed with good will" and "there was no trace of cruelty to be seen," which seems to indicate the visit was deemed a success in improving the image of the Empress Dowager. Each lady was given a "heavy gold chased ring set with a large pearl."²⁴ The privileged access, lavish hospitality, theatrical performances, and gifts worked to demystify the Empress Dowager, and the female-to-female contact improved diplomatic communication.²⁵

After Cixi returned from Xian, a series of audiences took place with foreign ambassadors and with ladies of the diplomatic corps. The ladies' meetings led Sarah



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi*, 1903-1904. Glass plate negatives, 24.1 x 17.8 cm (9.5 x 7 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-262 and SC-GR-254.

Conger to extend invitations to women of the Chinese court for tiffin (a light meal) at the American legation, a gesture that was reciprocated.²⁶ During an audience with the Empress Dowager the following year, Conger suggested Cixi have her portrait painted in oils by American artist Katharine Carl (1865–1938). If the portrait proved satisfactory, it would be sent to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Carl's mother was a relative by marriage to Robert Hart, Inspector General of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service. Her brother, Francis A. Carl, served as a customs official in China, and he was to be the commissioner for China for the St. Louis exposition.

The Empress Dowager's ladies-in-waiting included Deling and Rongling, the cosmopolitan daughters of the senior Manchu diplomat Yugeng, who together with his Chinese-American wife Louisa Pearson (also a lady-in-waiting) had recently returned to Peking from a diplomatic posting in France and prior to that in Japan. Deling and Rongling were fluent in Chinese, English, French, and Japanese, and they assisted the Empress Dowager in her contact with foreign visitors.²⁷ Deling, who had her own portrait painted by Katharine Carl in Paris, appears to have played a role in persuading the Empress Dowager to proceed with the portraits, not only in oils but also in photographs.²⁸ The Empress Dowager's willingness to be the subject of a Western-style portrait aligned with her growing interest in cultural diplomacy.

As Cixi's seventieth birthday approached, she engaged Xunling, the brother of Deling and Rongling, to take a series of portrait photographs. The Empress Dowager had received portrait photographs of monarchs and heads of state as official gifts. In 1902 envoys of Tsar Nicholas II presented a color photograph of his family to Cixi and Guangxu, and she would have been aware of the flattering regal portraits of Queen Victoria taken by the W & D Downey studio in 1893 and circulated on the occasion of Victoria's diamond jubilee four years later.²⁹ In terms of Chinese photography and the court, earlier portrait photographs had been taken of Yixin and Yihuan and other members of the imperial family, and Cixi may have seen



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Xunling, *Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi*, photograph, 1903–1904. From *Gugong jiucang renwu zhaopian ji* (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1990), p. 33, fig. 22.

the photographic albums that documented self-strengthening projects around the country in reports submitted to the court.

Xunling's carefully staged photographs were taken in a variety of mock and outdoor settings (fig. 2). Many of the photographs were styled in a purpose-built temporary structure in front of the courtyard of the Hall of Happiness and Longevity (*Leshou tang*), her residence at the Summer Palace, where there was plenty of natural light. Cixi was involved in the art direction and chose auspicious days for the work to take place. In the photographs the Empress Dowager wears many different outfits that display a striking array of beautifully embroidered informal robes, accessories, and headwear. Occasionally she wears an ornate short sleeveless vest, a short cape made from a lattice of strung pearls, or in outdoor scenes a full-length cape (figs. 4, 6, and 7). Many of the photographs are standard portraits (*biaozhun texie xiang*) that present the Empress Dowager seated on a thronelike chair in compositions that recall the full-length figure symmetrically positioned in formal painted portraits. In these photographs Cixi is often seated with a sign suspended above her head: "Long Live the Imperial Mother Empress Dowager of the Great Qing State." A longer text identifies her as the "Great Qing Imperial Mother Empress Dowager," with the eight titles that indicate the length of her period of influence at the court (figs. 3 and 4). In a number of images she appears in a more relaxed and cosmopolitan posture with her legs crossed.

Established in 1903, the Imperial Portrait Inventory (*Shengrong zhang*) details the photographs that were taken, how many of each were printed, and to whom and when they were given. For example, 103 prints were made of an "imperial portrait in



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi with women of the American Legation*, 1903-1904. Glass plate negative, 17.8 x 24.1 cm (7 x 9.5 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-249.

plain dress and with hair decoration and a round fan,” which suggests it was a favorite (fig. 5). In that image Cixi wears a plain-colored robe ornamented with roundels of damask-weave longevity symbols. The sign proclaiming “Long Live the Imperial Mother Empress Dowager of the Great Qing State” is displayed above her head. The record also cites sixty-three copies of an “imperial portrait with coronet and in dragon robe” and just one copy of an “imperial portrait in dragon robe with crown.”³⁰

The Empress Dowager Cixi’s birthday was celebrated as a festival that lasted for many days and involved Peking opera performances, banquets, and numerous audiences, including ones with the wives of foreign envoys. Katharine Carl, who produced four portraits in her nine months in China, was invited to participate. Carl recalls the celebrations for Cixi’s sixty-ninth birthday that began on Longevity Hill at two in the morning, the hour of her birth: “All the temples and buildings on the grounds, were brilliantly illuminated with splendid lanterns, elaborated ornamented tassels of red silk, with characters for longevity emblazoned thereon in vermilion.”³¹

In one photograph Cixi is seated, her feet supported on a foot stool, with Sarah Pike Conger, the American ambassador’s wife, standing at her side together with three other American women and Xunling’s daughter (fig. 6). In her gloved hand Mrs. Conger holds Cixi’s hand in a gesture of deference and intimacy. The sign hanging behind them declares, “Long Live the Imperial Mother Empress Dowager of the Great Qing State.” The visitors have small gourd ornaments pinned to their chests (or hanging from their necks), and they wear pairs of what appear to be jade bracelets, tokens of friendship from the Empress Dowager. Symbolic of long life, the gourd, like the longevity character (*shou*) and the chrysanthemum motifs embroidered on the Empress Dowager’s robe, suggests the photograph was taken to commemorate an audience associated with Cixi’s birthday.³²

A group photograph taken in front of the Gate of Dispelling Clouds (*Paiyun men*) in the Summer Palace shows the Empress Dowager standing at the center



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi with attendants in front of Paiyun men, Summer Palace, 1903-1904*. Glass plate negative, 17.8 x 24.1 cm. (7 x 9.5 in.) Cixi, *Empress Dowager of China Photographs*, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-250.

of the composition surrounded by court women (fig. 7). They include Empress Longyu and various ladies-in-waiting, notably Xunling's sisters Deling and Rongling, his mother Lady Yugeng, and Cui Yugui, a senior eunuch. Beyond the gate on Longevity Hill (*Wanshou shan*) is the Hall of Dispelling Clouds, the site of the Temple of Extended Longevity that was constructed by Emperor Qianlong to commemorate his mother's sixtieth birthday. The temple was destroyed by the Allied Forces in 1860 and rebuilt by Cixi in 1886. For Cixi's birthday celebration the renamed gate has been specially festooned with lanterns, tassels, flowerlike silk decorations, and longevity characters.

Another related image records the Empress Dowager seated and gazing into a mirror while appearing to insert a flower into her hair (fig. 8). The gesture is repeated in another standing portrait with what looks to be a peony, the queen of flowers and a reference to beauty and youthful vigor (fig. 9). Cixi's robe is decorated with longevity character motifs embroidered in gold-wrapped thread, and behind her, like a summative epitaph, hangs the sign "Great Qing Imperial Mother Empress Dowager" with her eight titles. The symmetrical display of evergreen pine and apples conveys the combined hope for long life and peace. (*Pingguo*, the word for apple, is a homophone for "to pacify the nation.") The self-conscious construction of the image and the two different poses with the mirror and flower suggest the image held a particular significance for Cixi.³³ It is likely that the staging of the photograph was designed as a personal celebration of her seventieth year and as a way to communicate her desire for peace and longevity.

Portraits of Cixi were displayed in her living quarters, framed and suspended from silver hooks in the form of dragons.³⁴ The Imperial Portrait Inventory notes that two large images were hung in the middle room of the Hall of Happiness and



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi with attendants in front of Paiyun men, Summer Palace, 1903-1904*. Glass plate negative, 17.8 x 24.1 cm (7 x 9.5 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-260.



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Xunling, *Empress Dowager Cixi, 1903-1904*. Glass plate negative, 24.1 x 17.8 cm (9.5 x 7 in.). Cixi, Empress Dowager of China Photographs, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, SC-GR-251.

Longevity (*Leshou tang*), and one was on view in the west room at the Summer Palace. Another appeared in the west chamber of the Palace of Tranquility and Longevity (*Ningshou gong*) in the Forbidden City, and two small imperial portraits were on display in the Hall of Calm Seas (*Haiyan tang*) at the Central and South Lakes (*Zhongnanhai*).³⁵ Constructed in a Western style inspired by a building of the same name that was originally in the Garden of Perfect Brightness (*Yuan ming yuan*) but was destroyed by the Allied Forces in 1860, the *Haiyan tang* was designed for Cixi to receive foreign visitors.³⁶

Other photographs were bestowed as gifts or awards of honor. For example, a large cropped print was given to President Theodore Roosevelt through Edwin H. Conger in response to a letter of congratulations marking the occasion of the Empress Dowager's seventieth birthday (fig. 10).³⁷ An American news report noted the singular presentation of the imperial portrait: "It is contained in a large gilt frame and rests in a black wood box, with a yellow silk curtain hanging over the front of the picture. The box is inclosed [*sic*] in a well-fitting, yellow-quilted silk case, and all over is spread an exquisitely embroidered cloth of imperial yellow."³⁸

The news report also commented that the photograph "gives her the appearance of forty years instead of seventy," which suggests the negative was retouched to smoothe lines and remove unflattering shadows (fig. 11). In the photograph Cixi wears an elaborate informal robe embroidered all over with roundels featuring stylized longevity characters that have been hand-painted in gold, and a vest that features the auspicious *ruyi* cloud-head pattern. Like the Chinese character for longevity, the *ruyi* scepter conveyed the wish that events would unfold according to one's hopes. Both motifs feature prominently in imperial birthday celebrations. The cropped image concentrates attention on the Empress Dowager, who stares directly at the viewer and comes across as a powerful female head of state.

Another of Xunling's portraits was given to Alice Roosevelt, the daughter of the American president, during an audience in 1905 as a member of the Taft goodwill mission to China (fig. 12).³⁹ The framed print is much smaller in scale and



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Xunling, *Portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi*, photograph and detail, 1903–1904. Courtesy of Blair House, The President's Guest House, United States Department of State, BH-2009 0001.

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Xunling, *The Empress Dowager Cixi*, 1903. The Alice Roosevelt Longworth Collection of Photographs from the 1905 Taft Mission to Asia. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, A2009.02.

has no tinting, but as with the print given to her father, it was carefully touched up to remove shadows and blemishes from Cixi's face and to make her look more youthful.

Within the body of photographs taken by Xunling, there is no example of Cixi dressed in *chaofu*, the most formal robes of state, which she wears in an undated painted portrait that is thought to have been made after her death (fig. 13).⁴⁰ Xunling's photographs could not replace the formal portrait paintings used in imperial rituals. They were instead an extension of informal images of leisure and entertainment. The paintings of Cixi dressed in Buddhist regalia, as Guanyin, and playing chess may be compared to the photographs of Cixi dressed up as Guanyin, posed on a barge in the Central Sea, and walking outdoors in the snow, all suggesting her differing roles and the changing seasons.⁴¹

Cixi's active experimentation with new techniques of portraiture—oil painting and photography—extended to her involvement in the construction and finish of the images. In her memoir Katharine Carl writes of interference she experienced with the Empress Dowager and court artists who insisted Cixi's face be clear and open and not heavily shadowed, in accordance with Chinese cultural sensitivities, and that Chinese text be added to her paintings, something for which she had not planned in terms of the composition.⁴² Similarly, Xunling's photographs were painstakingly staged, and as archivist David Hogge has shown, the images were carefully adjusted to accord with Cixi's taste and prevailing cultural mores.⁴³ In the time that Karl produced four oil paintings, Xunling created some seventy photographs of the Empress Dowager. Carl's oil paintings were worked and reworked in order to satisfy both the artist and the Empress Dowager. Xunling's photographs were worked on, touched up, and cropped to create special one-off images or multiple prints that could be distributed at will. Unlike brush-and-ink painting, photography and oil painting were techniques in which it was possible to create a portrait that could be altered and through which international audiences in changing times could interact. The power of photography, in particular, lay in its ability to



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Painted ritual portrait of Cixi in formal dress (*chaofu*). Collection: Palace Museum, Beijing. Provided by the Palace Museum. Photographer: Hu Chui.

record what looked real and yet could be manipulated, and the way images could be printed in a variety of sizes and in large quantities. Cixi was alert to the potential of photography to craft an image of herself that could be widely disseminated. In the hands of Xunling, it was a medium over which she could exert ultimate control. In this sense Xunling's photographs of Cixi anticipate the carefully constructed mass-media images of later figures, such as Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), Mao Zedong (1893–1976), and Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), who used photography as propaganda to promote themselves as powerful leaders.

When Carl's monumental oil portrait of the Empress Dowager was displayed at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Cixi's birthday celebrations reached the United States. The painted portrait, presented in a carved wooden frame decorated with imperial dragons and the Chinese character for long life, arrived in St. Louis in 1904, the year of the Empress Dowager's seventieth birthday.⁴⁴ The Imperial Chinese Commissioner to the Exposition held a reception at the Chinese Pavilion "in celebration of the seventieth birthday of Her Majesty The Empress Dowager of China." Printed with elegant copper-plate text, the red invitation was decorated with a gold-embossed character for longevity flanked by a pair of dragons.⁴⁵ The reception was another carefully staged public relations exercise that made use of Cixi's birthday to promote her image and that of China to the international public.

Birthdays and Propaganda

With the development of photographic and print technology, later Chinese leaders continued to use photography and print media to promote favorable images of themselves and their regimes. Chiang Kai-shek's sixtieth birthday in 1946 was marked by dedicated publications that included color photographs of the Generalissimo in ceremonial military dress and a staged image of him reading the book that he published in 1943 titled *China's Fate* (*Zhongguo zhi mingyun*).⁴⁶

After the Chinese Communist Party assumed power in 1949, the focus of national and international birthday celebrations shifted to the "birthdays" of the Communist Party, the People's Liberation Army, and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, had an aversion to celebrating birthdays and is said to have observed, "Celebrating a birthday does not mean that you will live longer, so there is no need to celebrate in a grand public manner."⁴⁷ An exception was Mao's seventy-first birthday on December 26, 1964, which was recorded by Qian Sijie (born 1928), Mao's personal photographer from 1964 to 1969. Qian photographed Mao at his birthday banquet with two important guests: Chen Yonggui, a model farmer from Dazhai, and Qian Xuesen, the father of China's nuclear program. The gathering involved key members of the Politburo and was part of a high-profile strategy to wrest government control from Mao's chosen successor and rival, Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969).⁴⁸ It marks the beginning of a far-reaching rectification campaign that ultimately resulted in the Cultural Revolution.

Mao Zedong's seventieth birthday was not publicly celebrated perhaps because in 1963 China was still recovering from the disastrous policy of the Great Leap Forward and the catastrophe of the Great Famine, in which millions of people died. A stamp bearing calligraphy by Lin Biao (1907–1971) was hurriedly issued in 1967 to commemorate Mao's seventy-fourth birthday in December.⁴⁹ From 1967 until the official end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, Mao's birthday on December 26 was marked in red in all Chinese calendars as the personality cult of Mao grew. The color red, traditionally used for auspicious occasions, such as birthdays and marriages, and adopted by the new "Red China" became appropriate for marking such ritual days.

Elements of tradition may also be seen in the birthday celebrations of Deng Xiaoping, China's most significant leader during the reform period after the end of the Cultural Revolution. A photograph that was featured prominently in the catalogue *Contemporary Chinese Photographs by Members of the China Modern Photo Salon 1985* shows Deng Xiaoping and an assembled throng of family members blowing out candles on a great birthday cake.⁵⁰ The mountainlike, eight-layer birthday cake has a large ornamental peach inscribed with the word "longevity"

on its summit. Each layer of the cake is decorated with red characters for longevity written in different calligraphic styles and is separated by peaches to underscore the wish for a long life. The peach motif and the Chinese characters for longevity hark back more than two hundred years to the plates of peaches being handed out in the handscroll commemorating the sixtieth birthday of Qianlong's mother as well as to the silk-embroidered longevity characters on the robes Cixi wore for photographs for her seventieth birthday in 1904.

The photograph commemorating Deng Xiaoping's eightieth birthday on August 22, 1984, was taken by Yang Shaoming (born 1942), the son of Yang Shang-kun, who was then president of the PRC. Yang Shaoming, who worked at the Xinhua News Agency, was a trusted chronicler of staged private moments in the life of Deng Xiaoping and his family. A photograph of Deng's eighty-fifth birthday on August 22, 1989, likely taken by Yang Shaoming, shows the leader surrounded by his wife, Zhuo Lin, and family members. He stands before a multitiered cake decorated with a huge disc bearing the Chinese character for longevity (*shou*). Behind him hangs a painting of a pine tree, a familiar motif to convey wishes for a long life. The photograph, found on the People's Web site (*Renmin wang*), identifies the location as Beidaihe, the seaside resort used by leaders of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee.⁵¹ Deng Xiaoping was celebrating there a little more than two months after he had ordered the bloody suppression of the demonstrations in Tian'anmen Square. It is a striking example of the ongoing use of images of China's leaders on their birthdays and the accompanying iconography of longevity that promotes feelings of stability in times of political turbulence and unrest.

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NOTES

- 1 The author thanks the anonymous readers for their constructive comments on this manuscript. Photographs by Xunling are held in the collection of the Palace Museum and glass plate negatives in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. The Smithsonian negatives, acquired in 1964 from a dealer in Los Angeles, came with the provenance that they were from the estate of Der Ling (Deling). For a detailed account of Xunling's photographs of the Empress Dowager and images of the thirty-six negatives in the Smithsonian collection, see David Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera: Photographing Cixi 1903–1904," MIT Visualizing Cultures, accessed June 6, 2012, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/empress_dowager/cx_essay01.html.
- 2 Lin Jing, *The Photographs of Cixi in the Collection of the Palace Museum* (Beijing: Forbidden City Publishing House, 2002), 22, and *Gugong jiucang renwu zhaopian ji* (Beijing: Zijinchengchubanshe, 1990), 25.
- 3 See Wang Cheng-hua, "Zou xiang 'Gongkaihua': Cixi xiaoxiang de fengge xingshi, zhengzhi yunzuo yu xiangxiang suzao," *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushii yanjiu jikan* 32 (2012): 239–320; Cheng-hua Wang, "Going Public: Portraits of the Empress Dowager Cixi, Circa 1904," *Nan Nü* 14 (2012): 119–76; Carlos Rojas, *The Naked Gaze: Reflections on Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 1–30; Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera."
- 4 For a discussion of imperial portrait painting and associated rituals in China, see Jan Stuart, "Images of Imperial Grandeur," in *China: The Three Emperors 1662–1795*, ed. Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson (London: Royal Academy of Art, 2005), 65–72; Wen C. Fong, "Imperial Portraiture in the Sung, Yuan and Ming Periods," *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995): 7–60; Mette Siggstede, "Forms of Fate: An Investigation of the Relationship Between Formal Portraiture, Especially Ancestral Portraits, and Physiognomy (*xiangshu*) in China," *International Colloquium on Chinese Art History, 1991*, pt. 2, *Proceedings, Painting and Calligraphy* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1991), 713–48; Patricia B. Ebrey, "The Ritual Context of Sung Imperial Portraiture," in *Arts of the Sung and Yüan: Ritual, Ethnicity, and Style in Painting*, ed. Cary Y. Liu and Dora C. Y. Ching (Princeton, NJ: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 68–93; Dora C. Y. Ching, "The Ming Imperial Image: The Transformation from Hongwu to Hongzhi," in *Bridges to Heaven: Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong*, ed. Jerome Silbergeld, Dora C. Y. Ching, Judith G. Smith, and Alfreda Murck (Princeton, NJ: P. Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art, Princeton University, 2011), 307–34.
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- Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)*, ed. David M. Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).
- 8 For the Qianlong Emperor's fascination with illusion and trompe-l'oeil paintings, see Nancy Berliner, *The Emperor's Private Paradise: Treasures from the Forbidden City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 175–91.
 - 9 Evelyn S. Rawski and Jessica Rawson, eds., *China: The Three Emperors 1662–1795* (London: Royal Academy of Art, 2005), 365.
 - 10 When a child is born, he/she is considered one year old (*sui*), and a year is added after the lunar New Year.
 - 11 Rawski and Rawson, *China*, 391–92.
 - 12 The *Wanshou dianjing tu* is illustrated in Wan Yi, Wang Shuqing, and Lu Yanzhen, eds., *Qing gong shenghuo tudian* [Life in the Forbidden City] (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2007), 232–33.
 - 13 Elisabeth Benard, "The Qianlong Emperor and Tibetan Buddhism," in *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of the Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*, ed. James A. Millward, Ruth W. Dunnell, Mark C. Elliot, and Philippe Forêt (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 130.
 - 14 Rawski and Rawson, *China*, 392–93.
 - 15 J. L. Cranmer Bing, ed., *An Embassy to China: Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney during his Embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung 1793–4* (London: Longmans, 1962), 104, 365 n. 24. Sir Joshua Reynolds was Principal Portrait Painter to the King and was granted the right to manufacture all the royal portraits required for the British embassies and consulates abroad and for presents to foreign rulers.
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 - 17 The drawing is in the collection of the British Library.
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 - 19 John Thomson's glass-plate negatives are in the collection of the Wellcome Library, London. See <http://catalogue.wellcome.ac.uk/record=b1177510>, accessed June 6, 2012.
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 - 21 This and the previous photograph are included in an album of photographs by Liang Shitai in the collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
 - 22 Lin Jing, *Photographs of Cixi*, 22–44.
 - 23 Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910), 39. Edwin H. Conger was the American ambassador to China (1898–1905).
 - 24 Conger, *Letters from China*, 40–41. The visit occurred on December 13, 1898.
 - 25 See Grant Hayter-Menzies, *The Empress Dowager and Mrs. Conger: The Uncommon Friendship of Two Women and Two Worlds* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 59–65.
 - 26 Hayter-Menzies, *Empress Dowager and Mrs. Conger*, 201–19.
 - 27 See Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera."
 - 28 Der Ling, *Two Years in the Forbidden City* (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1911), 215–16; Hayter-Menzies, *Empress Dowager and Mrs. Conger*, 231.
 - 29 Lin Jing, *Photographs of Cixi*, 8. For a discussion of exchanges of photographs between Queen Victoria and Thai royalty, see Rosalind C. Morris, "Photography and the Power of Images in the History of Power: Notes from Thailand," in Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Photographies East: The Camera and its Histories in East and Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 121–60.
 - 30 Lin Jing, *Photographs of Cixi*, 16–20.
 - 31 Katharine Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China* (New York: Century, 1905), 197–98.
 - 32 According to Grant Hayter-Menzies, there is no record in Sarah Conger's diary (which ends in early July 1904) of her posing for a photograph with the Empress Dowager. See Hayter-Menzies, *Empress Dowager and Mrs. Conger*, 300 n. 45.
 - 33 Carlos Rojas has interpreted Cixi's gesture of appearing to place a flower in her hair in terms of the Buddhist phrase 镜花水月 (like a flower in a mirror and the reflection of the moon in water). Its reference to the ephemeral nature of what is seen and of mortal existence points to the significance of her seventieth birthday in this respect. See Rojas, *Naked Gaze*, 6, 24–25.
 - 34 Lin Jing, *Photographs of Cixi*, 25.
 - 35 Lin Jing, *Photographs of Cixi*, 14–20.
 - 36 See Cheng-hua Wang, "Going Public," 146–47.
 - 37 Hogge, "The Empress Dowager and the Camera."
 - 38 "Gift to the President," *Washington Post*, February 26, 1905, 6. With thanks to David Hogge for providing a copy of this article.
 - 39 William Howard Taft, the American secretary of war, led a goodwill mission to Japan, the Philippines, and China. The photograph of the Empress Dowager that was presented to Alice Roosevelt is in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M.

- Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. See <http://siris-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!283469!0>, accessed January 29, 2013. With thanks to David Hogge for showing me the photograph and related material.
- 40 For a detailed discussion of the painting of Cixi in formal court dress, see Zhan Hanting (Chan Han-Ting), “Zhuanquan de yishu: Tan Cixi taihou dongfang chaofu xian yu xianf huashi suo hui xiaoxianghua yanjiu,” in *Zaoxing yishu xuekan* (2009), 9–115. The formal portrait of Cixi in court dress is similar to those created for wives of Emperor Xianfeng, Emperor Tongzhi, and Emperor Guangxu, which also have stylized longevity characters as a border of the vest. For images of other painted portraits of Cixi, see Xiang Si, *Cixi sijia xiangce* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 73, 153, 174, 202.
- 41 See Xiang Si, *Cixi sijia xiangce*, 73–74, 108.
- 42 Carl, *With the Empress Dowager of China*, 171–72, 237–38, 280–81, 287–88, 304–306; Hayter-Menzies, *Empress Dowager and Mrs. Conger*, 242.
- 43 Hogge, “The Empress Dowager and the Camera.”
- 44 Conger, *Letters from China*, 39.
- 45 For an image of the invitation, see http://www.cultural-china.com/chinaWH/China/features/the_number_one_expo_collector__tong_bingxue.html, accessed June 6, 2012.
- 46 *Qingzhu Jiang zhuxi liuzhi shouchen zhuanke* (Nanjing: Zhongyang ribaoshe, 1946).
- 47 Gu Kuiqin, ed., *Mao Zedong baojian yinshi shenghuo* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2003). See “Mao Zedong de shengri yanhui dou shang xie shenme cai?” <http://book.sina.com.cn/excerpt/eduhissz/2005-09-20/1432189768.shtml>, accessed June 6, 2012.
- 48 See “Mao Zedong piping Liu Shaoqi: Youren wang wo toushang la shi niao,” http://www.stnn.cc/reveal/200801/t20080102_705203.html, accessed June 6, 2012; “Mao Zedong shengri weihe qinzi yan qing Chen Yonggui.” During the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yonggui featured in intensive propaganda campaigns related to Dazhai. See, for example, *Hong taiyang zhaoliangle: Dazhai qianjin de daolu* (Beijing: Waiwen shudian, 1969). See <http://book.sina.com.cn/excerpt/sz/2008-06-30/1625239610.shtml>, accessed June 6, 2012.
- 49 For an image of the stamp, see Liu Zhaoyong372925 blog “Lin Biao tici youpiao,” <http://liuzhaoyong372925.blog.163.com/blog/static/168471692201131605457624/>, accessed June 6, 2012.
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- 51 See <http://news.qq.com/a/20090729/001661.htm>, accessed January 29, 2013.

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